

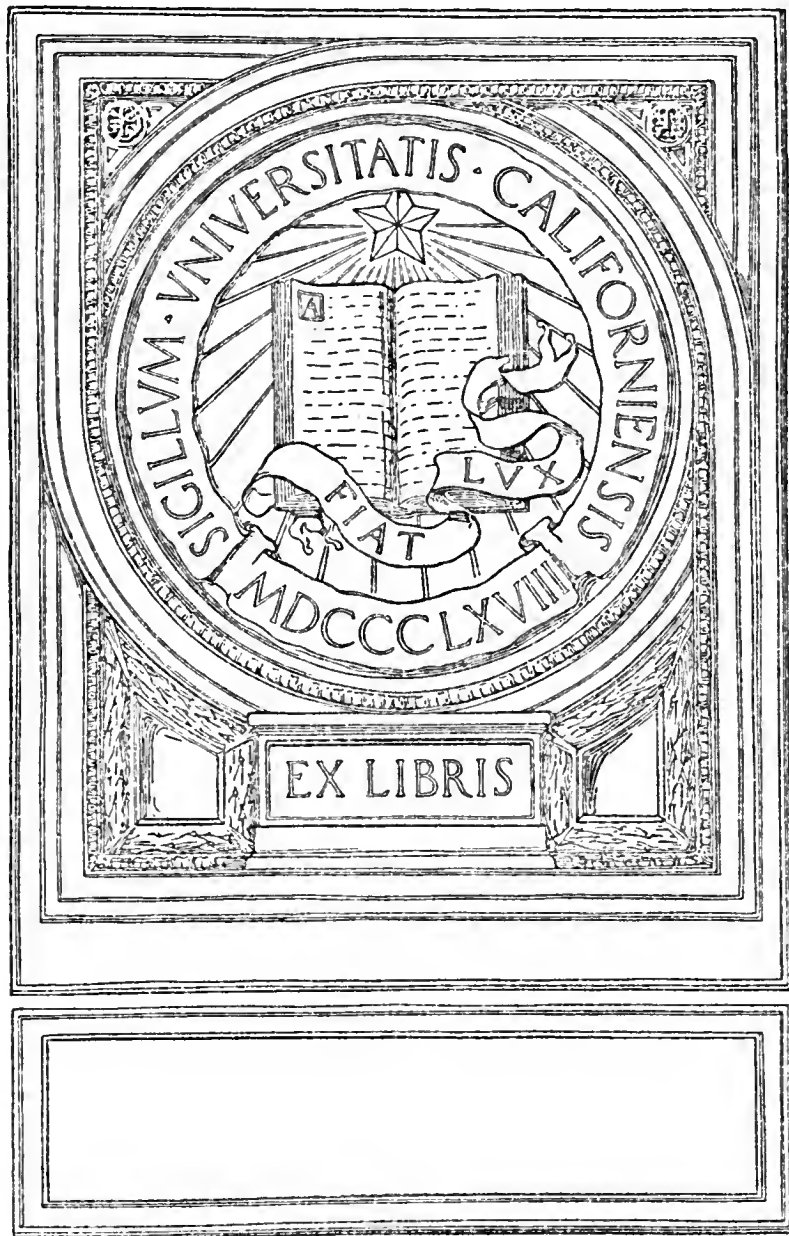
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Number

Three.

THE
Broken Vow;
OR, THE FORCED MARRIAGE.

BY ANNA GRACE CHRISTIAN.

A. WINCH, PHILADELPHIA.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1861, by Wm. J. Bunge, in the
Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States
for the Southern District of New-York.

THE

BROKEN VOW;

OR

THE FORCED MARRIAGE.

BY ANNA GRACE CHRISTIAN.

New York:
WILLIAM J. BUNCE,
68 BOWERY, NEAR CANAL ST.

1860.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the Year 1880, by
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CHAPTER I.

NEAR the village of Lenox, one of the most charming of mountain towns in Massachusetts, amid the wildest luxuriance of scenery, sunny slopes, upon whose side the "spangled meadows green," pleasantly invite the eye; hills, upon whose gentle slopes patches of cultivated fields contrast with the dark foliage of the old woods which the axe has spared, and the whole surrounded, in the misty distance, by looming eminences, among which, Bald Mountain raises his majestic head, stands a snug farm house. A mountain rill murmurs pleasantly before the door, and all around, the voice of birds and drowsy humming of bees, fall musically on the ear. The house is nearly hid from view by graceful, drooping elms, and around its porch the honey-suckle and rose unite their blossoms and their perfume.

The owner of this pretty place, is Hiram Dalton, a farmer well to do. His wife sleeps in the village cemetery, and he lives here with his son Foster, and his aged mother, who has long since seen her three score years and ten. A bustling young woman, named Nancy Peabody, the daughter of one of the poorer farmers of the neighborhood, and Elijah, or Lige Bates, a brisk, active, young fellow, who assists Hiram about the farm, complete the household.

On a beautiful morning in August, as the sun was just peeping over the distant hills and throwing his beams through the tangled branches of the old elms on to the floor of the best room, the windows of which being opened, betokened something unusual going on, Miss Nancy Peabody, in a terrible state of "flusteration" and impatience, might have been seen flying in and out of the house, rushing up stairs and down, and doing fifty different things in as many minutes, as if she had backed herself to perform some wonderful feat of housewifery within an impossible time.

The breakfast, ready cooked, stood simmering on the stove, in the kitchen, while a large table, in the same room, groaned with a gorgeous and tempting display of all sorts of pies, cakes, doughnuts, and various country delicacies, all of them the result of the skill, taste and industry of Miss Nancy herself. The best room was decorated in grand style with bouquets of fresh flowers, and sprigs of ever-green; the broad, old fashioned fire-place had been converted into a bower of feathery asparagus, and the ancient mahogany chairs, table and side-board, shone, by dint of hard scrubbing, to such an extent, that you might have seen your face in any of them.

The old lady, Hiram Dalton's mother, or "Granny," as she was universally called, not only by her own household, but by the whole population for miles around, among whom she was generally honored and loved, had not yet risen, and Hiram Dalton stood at the turn of the road, a short distance below the house, looking anxiously towards the village, as if he were waiting, with no very great amount of patience, for some one to appear in that direction. He was dressed in his best Sunday suit, with the color and cut of which, the congregation of the village church, where he worshiped, were well acquainted, he having worn it Sunday after Sunday for an almost forgotten number of years, and as he never put it on except on such

sacred occasions and at the town meetings, where his voice was as potential as the next man's, the fact of his having donned it on this morning, is proof positive that something of more than ordinary importance is afoot.

He kept peering through his spectacles, into the far distance, and occasionally he would stump up and down the road, muttering to himself, "The scape-grace! The good-for-nothing, shift-less, orinary cuss, to act so at such a time! I swan to man it is too bad. But I'll fix him." He had been doing this ever since day-light very much to the annoyance of Nancy, who was anxious for him to come in and have his breakfast, in order that she might get her "chores" done and out of the way; and now, that young lady, out of all patience, at last had resolved to let things take their chance, and after giving a glance all round, to see if there was not just one more thing to be done, and not being able to discover anything to which she could possibly turn her busy hands to advantage, she had gone up stairs to her room, from which she shortly emerged dressed in the most amazing "store clothes," and, as she thought, *au rigueur*, with the exception of her neckerchief, which could not be properly adjusted without the aid of the large looking-glass, which hung in the best room.

Thither, then, she repaired, and standing on tip-toe, for she was not tall and the mirror hung high, so as to take in as much of herself at a glance as she could, she surveyed her appearance, with which she seemed to be perfectly satisfied. And well she might, for a plumper, more buxom, brighter-eyed, smarter looking girl, it would have been hard to find.

The clock which stood in the corner sounded six, from its tall coffin-like case, as she commenced the adjustment of the handkerchief, which was to give, in her opinion, the *coup de grace* to her finery.

"Sake's alive," she said, speaking to herself, "six o'clock as

I'm a sinner, and breakfast not over yet! Well, they do say that time flies quicker on a day like this, than any other in the world. Confound it, I've forgot the pins, what a chuckle-head I be!" and she turned away to go up stairs again after the articles she needed.

But, half way between the mirror and the door, she met an unexpected obstacle to her progress, in the person of a spruce, brown faced, broad-shouldered, young countryman, about two and twenty, who, putting out both arms as she approached, seized her by her round, plump shoulders, the amazing attractiveness of which, the troublesome handkerchief was designed to cover, and endeavored to snatch a kiss from her pouting lips, as he exclaimed, "Mulasses and Honey! I'm dod rotted if you don't look killinger than ever."

The attempt, however, was a rash one, and his compliments were illy received, for a smart slap in the face, from the not very delicate hand of the fair Nancy, made his cheek tingle, and a good, hearty push sent him flying into the corner, while throwing her handkerchief over her shoulders, she stood in the defensive.

"Persimmons!" exclaimed the baffled youth, rubbing his cheek, "but I'm deuced if that ain't a rouser! Seems to me you're riled."

"Then keep your distance, Mister Lige Bates, and don't be maulin' folks before you know whether they like it or not."

"Well, I swow," he replied, gradually getting nearer to her, till he caught hold of the corner of her neck handkerchief, and by a sudden jerk, snatched it off her shoulders—"You're puttin' on airs ain't you? Had to come into the keepin' room to fix yourself, 'cause there's a big looking-glass in it."

"And what is that your business, you pesky imp? -You'd better be out doors attendin' to your chores and feedin' the cattle. Give me my handkerchief."

"It's mighty peart, ain't it?" he said tauntingly, keeping out of arms-reach, and shaking the handkerchief up and down, "Scissors, when they see you looking so all-fired fine, folks'll think that you're the bride. Jerusalem! don't I wish you was!"

"And if I was, I shouldn't be yours, so you needn't feel so anxious."

"Well, whose would you be, then? There ain't no other feller that's a sparkin' ye, be there?"

"You give me my handkerchief and mind your business—I vow I needn't go a beggin'," she said with a pout, snatching her handkerchief, and throwing it once more over her plump shoulders, "There's as good fish in the stream as ever was caught."

"Yes, but the trouble is to catch 'em. May be they won't bite at your bait. But Nancy," he said, softening, and looking at her lovingly, "Don't let's be snappish. What's the use o' being cross?"

"Give me a pin, then, if you want to see me good-natured."

"A dozen of 'em, if you want 'em," he said, taking half a dozen out of the lapel of his coat, which she took, and returning to the glass, again commenced the completion of her toilet, while Lige followed her and standing by her side, asked, coaxingly, "Say, Nancy, you didn't mean what you said jist now, did ye?"

"What, that I wouldn't marry you?"

"Yes."

"Be I in the habit of telling fibs?"

"Well, if you did mean it, who would you marry?"

"Nobody."

"What! Be an old maid? You git out."

"How do you like me now?" she said, after she had adjusted the handkerchief to her taste. "Does it look scrumptious?"

"Well, you look purty enough to make a feller's head swim. But ——"

"But what? What are you looking sour about?"

"Well, I feel kinder streaked—I wish you was as ugly as thunder, as ill-natured, cross-grained, and cantankerous, as—as—well, as Peleg Bryce."

"Ugh! The old serpent. What on airth do you want to speak of him for in a day like this. It's sure to bring ill-luck, and it's perfectly awful to think of him, even on a wedding-day."

"Well, I don't care, if you was as ugly as he is, I shouldn't love you as I do, and then I'd be a deuced sight better off."

"Well, then, just imagine I am old and wrinkled, and mean and ugly, and as cross as the old satan, and you won't feel bad any more. But you'll have to imagine it, for I ain't a going to be a bit wuss looking, nor wuss natured than I be, to please you, so there."

"And I wouldn't have you. See here, Nancy, I swow I was only jokin'—say," he continued, getting by degrees his arm round her waist. "'Spose we kill two birds with one stone, and when the minister comes to marry Foster Dalton to Mary Maythorne, let's get him to make you and I bone of one bone and flesh of one flesh. Won't ye, say?"

"Lige Bates, it aint no use for you to coax," she answered, looking up at him coquettishly, and not offering to disturb his arm, which enclosed her very closely by this time, "cause you see I aint a going to leap before I look. Marriage is a pesky serious business. It is mighty easy to get into the noose, but it is derved irksome to git eout of it. It is all very well to say, let's git married to-day, but it's just as well to think a little about to-morrow. We can't always tell ahead. Now spose I should marry Foster Dalton, instead of Mary Maythorne, I don't reckon I'd git much of a catch. It would make me feel

mighty uncomfortable to hear what's said agin him all over, I tell you. I'm a going to look before I jump."

"What do they say of Foster Dalton?"

"Well, in the first place, they say he gambils; and a man that gambils is a lost critter. Satan 'll git him, sure. They say he goes down to Lenox and gambils every night, with a hull lot of wild fellers, and that he loses every red cent he gits hold of, and they say besides that——"

"I know," interrupted Lige Bates, "I know, and it was that derved old, pizin rhinoceros, Peleg Bryce, who circulated them stories, and I jist believe it was him that fust led him into them ways."

"Jest as like as not," said Nancy, "jest as like as not, the hatchet-faced cuss. You know what happened last year and how his marriage was broken off?"

"Well, I did hear somethin' about it, but I didn't git all the facts."

"Well, the old hunks wanted to marry Mary Haythorne, himself."

"Do tell?"

"Yes, and they say that she'd a had him on account of the old folks, cause he was so rich, but a'fore he got the thing settled, along comes Foster Dalton and cuts him out, so that when Peleg asked her to marry him, she just up and refused him, point blank."

"And its mighty lucky for her she did," said Lige, "the old oak burr."

"After a while, Pelēg, he seed how the cat had jumped, and ever since he's owed a grudge against Foster Dalton, who is going to be married to-day, here, in his father's house. She and her folks give their consent that the marriage should come off here, in place of the bride's house, all on account of old Granny Dalton, who is too old to travel so far, and who would

have died if she had not been by her grandson when the ceremony was done."

"Well, I wish 'em both luck," said Lige, "it will make the old house different though, having a young wife in it. How will you like that?"

"Oh, she and I will git along. She's a nice gal, and as long as she don't interfere with my ways, I'll endure her! But come," she said, relieving herself of the arm of Lige, which all this time had kept its place around her buxom form, "we aint got any time to lose. The wedding is to be at twelve o'clock so as to give the bride's folks a chance to git home before night, and here breakfast aint over yit. There stands the old man watching for his son. The confounded fool, what did he want to stay out all night for, when he knew he was going to be married in the morning? He'll be late."

"I know one who won't be late for the wedding one of these fine days—when—when——"

"When what?"

"Why, when yours and mine comes off, to be sure. I ain't going to take you at your word."

"Won't you?"

"No. Because you don't mean it. Do you? Won't you marry me some day?"

"Perhaps."

"Perhaps!" exclaimed Lige, seizing her quickly and giving her a hearty kiss, for which he did not get his face slapped this time, "Oh, punkins, that's jist as good as yes! When you are my wife I shall be your husband, and ——"

"But I only said perhaps."

"Well, perhaps; that's all right. Perhaps will do for me now. Perhaps means yes, and I'm as happy as a pig among acorns."

"There," said the blushing Nancy, getting away from him,

"I hear my milk boiling over, and there's the old man a'calling you ; so clear !" and they both left the room, she to run into the kitchen to look after the milk, and Lige to answer Hiram Dalton, who was shouting for him at the top of his voice.

"Why don't you answer when I call ?" asked Hiram, crossly, when Lige made his appearance on the porch of the house. "Are you deaf? Run down and put the sorrel colt in the wagon, and then come into breakfast."

Lige went to obey the old man's wish without paying any attention to his ill-humor, because he knew he was vexed at the absence of his son, and Hiram went into the kitchen where Nancy was already putting breakfast on the table. "Run in," he said, "and bring out Granny, she must be ready by this time, and let us have breakfast. You have seen nothing of my son? He has not come in the back way?"

"No," answered Nancy, going to call Granny. "Have you seen him coming?"

"No," answered Hiram, angrily, "If I had I should not ask you where he was. But go ! you know what you have to do."

Nancy bounced out of the room in a huff, for she was independent, as her class generally are, and didn't put up quietly with cross words from anybody.

"The young villain !" Hiram muttered, as the clock struck seven. "Not here yet. To go away at such a time and for such a purpose. He is a bad son, and will, I fear, make a bad husband. I ought to be thrashed for ever giving my consent to the marriage. If Granny finds it out, it will kill her ;" and the old man paced the room, full of grief and anger.

In a moment or two Granny entered the apartment, supported by Nancy.

She was over eighty years of age, but her form was erect, and her eye looked as bright as it had fifty years before, while

her face, though wrinkled, was a goodly one to look on, for it beamed with benevolence, piety, and sympathy.

"Ha! Good morning, Hiram," she said. "Good morning, boy. I give you a great deal of trouble, Nancy! Ah, my old limbs, they are not as nimble as they used to be. Good morning, Elijah. You have all been waiting for old Granny, I suppose."

Lige having returned, they took their places at the table. The old lady sitting by the side of her son, and asking a blessing.

"I feel very happy to-day," she said, sipping her coffee, "and I am glad to see you all looking so well. I am not very hungry. I don't feel like eating my breakfast. I am so full of joy. Ha, this is a great day! I have not seen such a day since you got married, Hiram. I have been dreaming of it all night. But what is the matter with you? You don't seem easy, Hiram. What troubles you? You don't eat your breakfast, and you look as cross as ——"

"Oh, there is nothing the matter with me, nothing," said Hiram, quickly. "Nothing at all, I am like you, the thought of what is going to happen has taken away my appetite. That is all, I shall be as jolly as anybody, soon."

Little more was said until the meal was finished. Hiram rose, and after conducting his aged mother to her favorite seat by the window, from which she could enjoy the beautiful prospect which surrounded the house, he went to the door, and going into the road, once more looked to see if he could yet perceive any signs of his absent son.

"Who are you looking for?" asked Granny, when he came in.

"Never mind," answered Hiram, "I am looking for—for—" and then turning to Lige, he said, "Why don't you give me my pipe? You know I've been looking for it for the last two hours."

Lige shrugged his shoulders as he turned to Nancy, and said in a low voice, "He's as mad as a hornet."

"Then get his pipe, and let him stop his mouth with it," said Nancy, pushing him away.

"Good Gracious ! Hiram, exclaimed the old lady, looking at him sharply through her spectacles, "What is the matter with you this morning ? How contrary and cross you are. What has gone wrong ?"

"Nothing, nothing, nothing. You know I cannot help it. It is my disposition. The least thing ruffles me. Do not pay any attention to me. Then turning away, "The mean cuss !" he muttered to himself, "Oh, I'll talk to him !"

"But, bless me," asked Granny—as if for the first time she had missed her grandson. "Where is Foster ? Hasn't he come down yet?"

"No, not yet," his father answered. "Not yet."

"Sake's alive !" the old lady ejaculated, "but it takes him a long while to dress himself on his wedding morning. Elijah, won't you go and tell him to hurry down ? I want to see him, to bid him good day, and wish him joy, the dear fellow. Nancy, I hope you have got everything in order. Everybody will be here, and we must not look shiftless. Hiram, have you asked Peleg Bryce to come to the wedding?"

"Yes, mother. I could not very well get out of it."

"Well, you was right. You was right. It wouldn't do to take any notice of what has happened. It would look as if we wanted to slight him. Oh, by the way, come here Nancy, I want to speak to you. Have you," she whispered, when Nancy had gone over to her, "have you done as I asked you ? Is it there?"

"What do you mean ?" asked Nancy.

"Why, the present, the surprise ? Have you put it in his room, where he will be sure to have seen it as soon as he entered the door?"

"Oh, yes, Granny, I have put it just over his looking-glass. He'll be sure to see it there."

"Do you think it will please him, eh?" asked Granny, her old face beaming with affection, "will he like it? Ah! she is a beautiful watch, girl. She cost me fifty dollars in goold. But we don't have a grandson married every day, and so long as it makes him happy, the dear boy, I wouldn't have begrudged a hundred. No, no, not I."

"Poor old woman," thought Nancy, "she little thinks he has not been home all night, and has not perhaps thought of her for a week."

"Ah, well, have you sent for him, why don't he come? He is a long while ——"

Lige, who had been standing on the porch, here entered the room, and going stealthily up to Hiram Dalton, whispered in his ear :

"He is coming; I saw him just now slip round the house and go in the back way."

"Well, and why do you whisper it?" asked Hiram, petulantly, "What on earth do you want to make a mystery of it for?"

"I thought," commenced the young man, pointing to Granny, "that the old lady might be kinder put out if she know'd that ——"

"Right, boy—right," answered Hiram, taking his hand and shaking it warmly. "It was thoughtful of you," and he walked towards the window, by the foot of the stairs, which led to the chamber occupied by his son.

In a minute or two, Foster Dalton came in at the back door. Seeing his father's face turned, and hoping to reach his room without being observed or questioned, he shut the door quietly after him, and walking on tip-toe, noiselessly approached the foot of the stairs; but just as he had placed his foot upon the bottom step, Hiram turned and regarded him with a stern look.

“Ah, is it you, at last?” he asked.

The young man, finding himself thus detected, started, and a blush of shame suffused his face ; but, in a moment, his audacity returned, and holding out his hand, he said, with an air of affected frankness :

“Yes, father ! Good morning.”

But Hiram threw back his proffered hand and uttering an angry exclamation, broke his pipe across it.

The noise caused Granny to turn her head, and perceiving Foster she said :

“Ha, boy ! you have crawled out at last have you ? Come and give me a kiss.”

The young man did as she requested, and stooping, kissed her wrinkled forehead, while his father turned away with a disturbed and angry look.

“You would not forget your old Granny, would you ?” she said, caressing him, and twining her thin fingers in his beautiful clustering curls. “In your excitement and joy, you still keep a corner of your heart for her, eh ?”

“Of course, dear grand-mother.”

“But you look very pale this morning, lad, and your face is anxious and worried—you look tired.”

“Yes,” said Hiram, turning towards her quickly, “I suppose he has not slept much, and perhaps,” he continued, more sternly, and looking at his son in a reproachful manner, “perhaps he has not slept at all !”

“Ah ! yes, yes, I understand. He has been thinking of *her* all night. Have you not, boy ? Thinking of to-day, of your joys, your hopes, your future, your happiness. Well, well, sleep will come by-and-by. It will get to be an old story. But you are very pale. Have you eaten anything this morning ?”

“No, dear Granny—not yet. I do not wish any breakfast.”

“But you must eat something, and you have not much time

to lose. You know you have to go with your father to bring Mary over."

"Yes, yes, I know."

"I suppose you are all impatience. The minister will be here at twelve o'clock. It was very good of them to have the wedding here. It aint the custom for a girl to leave her father's house to be married. But what could they do? I couldn't go there with these poor old limbs, and I should never have got over it if I had not been present at your happiness, boy. No, no."

"I know it, Granny—I know it."

"But it is time you were dressing yourself, Granny," Nancy suggested. "The folks will be coming soon, and I won't get a chance to help you, if you don't begin pretty quick."

"Pshaw! child, don't bother, I have plenty of time. But I say, Nancy, he has not spoken of the watch," whispered the old lady in her ear. "I say, Foster," she continued, aloud, paying no attention to Nancy's head shaking, with which she tried to stop her. "Tell me, Foster, boy, how do you like her? Does she suit your fancy?"

"Oh, certainly. Exceeds all I could wish."

"Ha, ha! And is she not got up in very good taste?"

"Excellent! Granny, excellent!"

"Ha! I knew you would say so."

"Poor old woman," said Nancy quietly to Lige, "she is speaking of the watch, and he thinks she is talking about his intended. I'd like to warm his wool for him, the derved pump!"

"Yes, yes. I knew she would please you," the old lady went on, with a chuckle, "and I have had the surprise in my head for a long time."

"Ah, you thought then ——"

"Yes, and though there were several to choose from ——"

"Then you, yourself, selected her for me, eh?"

"To be sure I did, and I selected the richest, because ——"

"But it is not her wealth that I sought, you know, Granny. I love her for herself."

"To be sure; but though she is a gold one, I have no doubt that a silver one would have pleased you quite as well, so long as I ——"

"Gold!" asked Foster, not understanding what the garrulous old woman meant.

"Gold! to be sure she's gold. The shopkeeper warranted her to be gold, and that her works would not get out of order in a year."

"How?" exclaimed Foster, now fairly mystified, "What do you mean?"

But Nancy, though she would have delighted in teasing the young man still more, here came to the rescue, and for fear that his grand-mother would discover his fault, she whispered in his ear, "It is a watch she speaks of; a present, a surprise, for you."

"Oh, yes, ah," said Foster, seeing at once the mistake he had made, "To be sure, and I have not yet thanked you for it."

"Never mind thanks, keep it for my sake. Never part with it, and when its hands point to the hour when your poor old Granny shall bid you good-bye for the last time, you will think of this, and remember that she laid her old hands upon your young head, and asked her Heavenly father to be ever mindful of the happiness of her dear boy, and to bless you and your dear wife."

"The scoundrel!" thought Hiram, "if he has a conscience, how it must prick him."

"But come," said the old lady, "I must be getting ready! Come, Nancy, Child, and help me to my room, and put on my best gown. We must all look our best to-day. Come, come, be quick, Child. Go and get ready too, Foster."

"I will," the young man replied, going to the stairs.

But his father, placing his hand on his shoulder, stopped him, saying quietly, "Remain! I've got something to say to you," and then turning to the old lady, he said, "Go and dress, mother, Forster and I will be ready in time."

"All right," said Granny, rising, "all right."

"Will you take hold o' me?" asked Lige, offering his shoulder for her to rest upon.

"What do I want of you, eh?" she asked. "What should I want to lean on your shoulder for? I'm as strong as you are, if I am not so young. Look!" and the old lady strutted out of the room as straight as a grenadier.

"Well," said Lige to himself, "I don't know but I'd better git eout too. There's a storm a' coming up and I'll clear till it blows over;" and he left the room, leaving Hiram Dalton and his son alone.

CHAPTER II.

FOSTER DALTON was about twenty-three years of age. He was an only son, and had been the idol of his mother, and the spoiled pet of his grand-mother. His father, too, though he had endeavored to hide his feelings, under a rough, though not harsh manner towards him, had performed his share in the work of making him, what he had been from infancy, a spoiled child.

At an early age, he had been sent to school at a distance from home, and from which he was recalled to weep over the death-bed of his mother, who died in giving birth to a daughter, who only survived her a few hours.

After this, he remained at home for a few years, occasionally assisting his father on the farm, but he was by no means fond of labor, and at last, Hiram Dalton yielded to his solicitations, in which his grand-mother joined, to send him to College, and he entered Yale, in his eighteenth year.

Here he did not distinguish himself by his application and scholarship, although his natural abilities, and quickness of perception, relieved him from much of the severe drudgery of study, so that he was, in spite of all his recklessness, enabled to hold his own with those in his class who were more industrious. He soon acquired a reputation for being forward in all kinds of mischief, and he was frequently brought to task for his delinquencies. Among other vices to which he was addicted, that of gambling was the worst, and his passion for games, of chance carried him to such extremes, that he sacrificed every thing to its indulgence. Night after night he spent

at the gaming-table, sometimes winning, but more frequently losing every penny that he could command.

His father, although he considered him extravagant, and often expostulated with him upon the sums of money he spent, had no thought of the truth, and continued to supply him with the means of indulging in his fatal weakness.

By dint of hard "cramming" and lenity, he managed to graduate, and he left College in his twenty-second year, an indifferent scholar, but a confirmed and reckless gambler.

On his return home he entered upon the study of the law, in the town of Lenox, and still continued his habit of gambling, until at last, his father, whose purse was continually depleted to supply his losses, had his suspicions aroused, and, on inquiry, learned the painful truth.

He took him severely to task, and for a time refused to assist him in any way ; but upon his solemn promise to reform, oft-times repeated, he had forgiven him, and given his consent to his marriage with Mary Maythorne, the daughter of a worthy farmer, who resided in the neighborhood.

Just before the wedding-day, Hiram Dalton began to suspect that his son had continued to deceive him, and that he was still a slave to the dreadful fascination of his fatal vice.

He had remonstrated, threatened, implored, in vain. He had painted the misery which a continuance in such a course would bring down on the head of the woman he was about to swear to love and cherish, in the vain hope of arousing in him a determination to break the chains which bound him to the gaming-table, and now, when he found that all would do no good, he had made a stern resolve to pursue the only course left for him, and to do his duty, let the consequences be what they might.

But the father did not know all the errors of his misguided son. He fancied that gambling was his only besetting sin, and that once redeemed from it, his boy might yet live to be an

honor and a comfort to his declining days. Alas! had he known that, besides his passion for play, he had conceived another, the indulgence of which had not only plunged his soul deeper in sin, but had forever blighted the peace and happiness of one whose only fault had been a deep, abiding trustfulness in him, had he known this——! But we will not anticipate.

When Hiram Dalton found himself alone with his profligate son, his long pent up rage and indignation found vent, and turning upon him, he asked, "When and where is this to end? How long will you continue your dissolute life.

"But, father ——" Foster began.

"Don't call me father!" the old man exclaimed, "You have forfeited the right. What new excuse were you about to offer? Where were you all the night?"

The young man stamped his foot angrily, but made no reply.

"Where were you? I say," Hiram repeated, "do you think your angry stamping and fuming will close my mouth? Do you think that your conduct does not make me suffer? Oh, when I think that last night—even last night—you could not keep away from that damnable place, when I think you had so little heart or feeling as to go, though your presence there might have been disclosed to the family of which you were so soon to become a member, my face burns with shame for you. What if they should know of your conduct? A pleasant thought for your intended wife, that her husband spent the night before his marriage in a gambling hell."

"But ——"

"But, but! Did you not see the fear I was in but now, lest your grand-mother should suspect the truth? Poor old woman, would she not have died, if she had known what a wretch you were? If I had not hid from her ——"

"But listen!"

"Silence, Sir, and listen you."

"Go on, Sir."

"Thank you for your kind permission! I will go on. Do you think you can impose silence upon me? How have you dared, since your sworn promise—but hold! I will talk no more. The time has come for me to act. I have a duty to perform. Do you think I will allow this marriage to proceed? Do you imagine I will allow you to practice a base deception upon the honest people and the loving hearts, who, in their confidence in you and me, intrust their daughter's happiness to your care? No, I will inform them of all. I will tell them that you are without heart, principle, or honor. I will tell them you are a gambler, and that they had better see their daughter in her grave, than place her in your arms. In the arms of a man who would ——" Hiram continued, lowering his voice so as not to be heard by Granny, "who would not hesitate to break the heart of his poor old grand-mother, and who has dissipated at the gaming-table, nearly all his father ever acquired by honest industry."

"No, no, father. You will not—must not—do this; hear me!" The young man urged.

"I will not hear you. I have said it, and may I never see Heaven if I do not do as I have said."

"But they will not listen to you."

"Not listen to me, Sir. What do you think I am? A liar, like you?"

"A liar! But you are my father," said Foster, turning deadly pale, and trembling in every limb.

"Yes, a liar. Have you kept the promises you made to me—promises of reformation and good conduct? Have you kept the oaths you have made to the same purpose? And you turn pale with anger when I call you liar. What are you else?"

"But, father!"

"Well, what answer can you make?"

"Only one word. I love Mary Maythorne, and nothing in the world shall separate me from her."

"It is false!" the old man said. "You do not love her. Had you loved her, for her sake if not for mine, you would have led a different life long ago. True love makes a man virtuous and honest."

"But what will the world say?"

"What will it say?" repeated Hiram, throwing himself into a chair, "What can it say, if I consent to this wicked thing? They will say that I, Hiram Dalton, allowed my son to marry Mary Maythorne, because she was rich, and that her fortune would repair the breach made in mine by my dissipated son! That is what the world will say, and it would bow my head in shame. No. I will not suffer it!" And the old man rose and went towards the door.

"Stop, father. Do not take this rash step without hearing me; without giving me an opportunity to justify myself," exclaimed the young man, making after him, and seizing him by the hand.

"Justify yourself! What impudence!" he said, coming back to his seat.

"Listen to me a moment," the young man continued, "and after I have spoken, judge me. But let me speak all that I feel."

"Well, speak. What have you to say?"

"First, let me ask your pardon for the anger I have displayed towards you, Sir. One cannot always be master of his feelings, and you have borne heavily upon me. I am sorry. And now, I will explain my absence last night. I will not try to palliate the faults of which I am guilty, but last night, I went to liquidate a sacred debt—a debt of honor. I acknow-

ledge that for a long time my fatal passion has carried me away, but I have, at last, broken the spell and am once more free; for from the day upon which I swore to you that I would be worthy of my Mary's love, I have played no more. But my companions had claims upon me—claims which compromised my honor, and I determined before I led her to the altar, I would cancel them. Should I not pay the money which I owed, I knew that the curse of my folly would follow me day after day, and perhaps lead to the discovery of my former habits by my wife, and I determined to banish this fear. It was to complete my enfranchisement that I was absent last night. I have accomplished my object. I am free. And now, I ask you whether I did not perform an act of duty by guarding against any sad effects of my evil course in the future?"

"Ah, Foster! Foster!" said Hiram Dalton, half convinced, "Could you know how wickedly you have acted. How I have suffered."

"But you believe what I have said?"

"Should you deceive me still?"

"Ah, you little know how this love has changed me."

"And are you really free? Can no one in the world some day tax you ——"

"Father, I have told the truth."

"One more question," said the old man, rising, "I must be well assured. Tell me, do you really and sincerely love this girl?"

"Nothing shall ever separate me from her."

"But have you not felt or said the same before, in other cases? Is this the first woman you ever swore to love eternally?"

"Great Heaven! can he suspect!" thought Foster, turning away his head and biting his lip. Then summoning fresh courage, he asked, "What mean you?"

"Is there no woman who can accuse you of falsehood, as there is no man who can accuse you of dishonor?"

"No, father, no. But come," he added, as if anxious to change the subject, "it is time you were on your way. So, now that you are calm, and have, I trust, forgiven me, please precede me to Mr. Maythorne's and inform them I will be there immediately. I have to dress, and we must return, you know, by twelve o'clock."

"May I trust you?"

"Believe me, you may. You shall never have cause to repent your confidence."

"Ah, should you practice upon my affection and credulity, to deceive me again, Heaven will punish you. You have told me the truth? The whole truth? I do not speak to you now as your father, nor ask you to answer as a son, but as between two friends, two men of honor, I ask you have you spoken truth?"

"I have."

"Then give me your hand, and I will do all that you desire. Now hand me my hat and cane, and I'll be off."

Foster shook hands with his father, upon whose face a smile of happiness once more beamed, and gave him his hat and cane. When the old man reached the door, before which the sorrel colt was standing ready hitched to the wagon, he shook hands with him again, and jumping into the vehicle, said :

"Dress yourself as soon as you can, and follow me directly. And I say boy, I was pretty hard on you just now. But don't let it make you unhappy."

"No, no, father," said Foster, going to the side of the wagon, and once more taking the old man by the hand, "I know you meant it only for my good, and I shall remember it only to profit by it."

"That's right. Good-bye." And Hiram Dalton was just about to start the colt, when Peleg Bryce came up.

He was a thin, spare man, of about fifty years of age. But his lantern jaws, beak-like nose and protruding chin, together with the wrinkles which crossed his face in all directions, like lines upon a rail-road map, made him look older than he was. His eyes were small, cold, grey, and shark-like in their expression, while a long crane neck, in which every cord and vein was visible, red coarse hair, and very large ears, completed as disagreeable a picture as any one need look upon.

"Good day. Good day, neighbors," he said, a sickly smile making his sinister looking face more wicked than ever in its expression, and holding out a thin, dirty looking hand, so covered with freckles that it looked like some nasty sort of scaly fish. "How do you find yourselves this morning? this happy morning, I should say. You are going off in grand style neighbor Dalton. Going for the fair young bride, I suppose, eh?"

"With your consent. If you have no objection, Peleg Bryce," answered Hiram, with ill-concealed irritation.

"Oh, I wouldn't stop you for the world. Don't mind me. Don't stand on any ceremony with me. I did not know exactly what time this here marriage was to take place, and so I thought I'd come early and find out, 'case you see it's all'ers best to be in time."

"Ah, well, Peleg, Foster will tell you all about it. I must go, now." Then turning once more to his son, he said, in an undertone, as Peleg moved towards the door of the house, "If I have been too harsh, forgive me, boy. I am rough sometimes."

His son made no answer, but once more pressed his hand, and Hiram giving the sorrel colt a fillip with his whip, was soon whirled out of sight, and Foster followed Peleg into the house.

"I don't like that hand-shaking," thought Peleg to himself. It does not suit my plan. It is a bad sign just at this time."

Then, as Foster entered the house he said, rubbing his horrid hands, "Well, Mr. Foster Dalton, it will soon be over, eh?"

"I hope so," said Foster, going up the stairs which led to his room. "I hope so."

"Yes, but we can't always tell, you know. There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, Mr. Foster, and we are never sure of a thing, until we have it."

"No," answered the young man, stopping on the stairs, and turning round, "you ought to know that, Peleg."

If he could have seen the expression of Peleg's face when he heard his words, he would have been sorry for his remark, for it betokened a malignant hate, which any man might have feared.

"Well, well," he said, quietly, suppressing his anger, "We shall see. You may find it out, too, Foster Dalton. Not that I wish *you* any ill-luck. Heaven forbid! but a marriage broken off, always leaves a broken heart. Yes," he said, fixing his eye on Dalton; "always, always!"

"What do you mean, Peleg?" asked the young man, descending the stairs, and going to him.

"Oh, nothing. I was just thinking, that was all."

"But why do you use such words to-day, particularly?"

"Because, Foster Dalton, I remember that—but never mind, never mind. What had I to do with a wife? Why marry? To frighten her to death with my ugliness? No, no; it is better after all, that I should remain single. I can amuse myself with my money. But I am detaining you, and your father may be obliged to wait for you, perhaps. What time does the ceremony take place?"

"At noon."

"Here?"

"Yes. Here."

"Thank you. I shall be back in time."

Foster turned away and went to his room, and after a short time left the house ; as he did so, he ejaculated, mentally, "Thank Heaven, in an hour all will be over."

Peleg stood watching him as he rode away, and as Foster turned the corner of the road and disappeared from his sight, he rubbed his hands and grinned maliciously, as he muttered to himself—"Go your ways—go your ways, my innocent lambs, you little dream what is in store for you! I am an ugly old serpent, with fiery hair and yellow skin, am I? Well, well, I have sharp teeth, too, and you shall find that Peleg Bryce can bite as well as snarl. Yes, yes, Mr. Foster Dalton, I don't forget the debt I owe you, and I'll pay it, with interest. Yes, laugh," he growled, as sounds of mirth issued from the room where Granny was completing her toilet, and, with the assistance of Nancy, making herself grand for the great occasion. "Laugh away, laugh while you may. It won't be long. I have a nice little scheme in my head which will make you laugh on the other side of your mouths soon. She would not have me, the fair, delicate, little Mary Maythorne! Old Peleg Bryce would not do for her ; he was not gay and handsome enough ; but if I am not a fool, she would rather marry me, ugly and old as I am, than you, Mr. Foster Dalton, when she shall know the little secret I can whisper in her ear. Ha! ha! ha! I can see her now ; when her eyes are opened, how surprised she will be ; and her handsome intended, and his self-satisfied old father, and the old woman—ha! ha!—how they will all stare and take on! Ha! here comes that young devil, Lige Bates, I'll whet my appetite on him. Patience, Peleg, patience! Your time will come."

"I say, Nancy, Nancy!" exclaimed Lige, entering the room, and not seeing Peleg. "They are coming. I see a hull lot of folks coming over the hill. Hurry up!" then turning and seeing Peleg, his countenance fell, and he said : "Hillo! old Peleg, I didn't know you was here."

"Yes, here I am, in time, you see. How are you, Lige?"

"Oh! I'm all right. As happy as a colt in a ten acre lot."

"So much the better for you."

"And how be you? You don't look very jolly. You look more like going to a funeral than a wedding."

"You are wrong, Lige, wrong. I never was half so happy in my life," said Peleg, rubbing his big ears.

"Well, so much the better for you!"

"I am happier than you even."

"Well, I'm derved if you look it," thought Lige. "To judge from your face, I should say that you was about as miserable an old cuss as ever felt bad because other people felt good."

"Yes, I am happier than you," Peleg went on. "You know I always enjoy seeing other people contented."

"Then you are really glad Foster Dalton is going to git married, be you?"

"To be sure! when he is married I shall dance for joy."

"The mean, ornary, lying, old Belzebub!" Lige thought to himself. "He's jist about as happy as if he had sot on a hornet's nest."

"What a happy time it will be, wont it, Lige," Peleg commenced again, with a hideous grimace, "when they are man and wife? They are both so young, so handsome! And with such a future before them! I should like to have been the groomsman to such a pair!"

"Well, why didn't you propose it to the groom? He'd a jumped at the chance. It would a' been a strong contrast."

"Would it, Mr. Lige? Thank you. I am much obliged to you."

"Yes. You look as if you was a swelling and choking like an old turkey cock. You know you'r as mad as pisen."

"No, I'm not, Lige. Everybody has his joke on old Peleg, but I don't mind it. I understand that Creighton Herbert is the chosen man."

"Yes, so I hear," said Lige. "He is one of Foster Dalton's best friends, though he hasn't been in Lenox long. He's awful rich, they say. Got lots of housen in York, owns hull squares on 'em."

"He's a doctor, I hear, but I havn't heard of his being so dreadful rich, Lige."

"Oh, yes," said Lige, "he's handsome, rich, and smart. I've hearn tell he was a doctor, but only practices for fame. He'll make a splendid groomsman."

"People exaggerate sometimes, Lige. All is not gold that shines, and Mr. Herbert may ——"

"Oh, git eout! you are always trying to pick a hole in somebody's coat. You can't bear to think that anybody should be more thought of than you. Everybody thinks a heap of Mr. Herbert, and everybody knows that he's got more money than you have, twice over, and that he's a ripping good doctor among the poor folks!"

"A doctor for groomsman! That's not a bad idea. They may need him. The bride might faint, or something might happen, and it would be handy to have a doctor around," said Peleg, rubbing his hands and grinning.

"I reckon if anybody gits sick at this wedding it'll be you, old Peleg. You'r bursting with wrath now. You'd better keep cool, and go and soak that red head o' your'n," said Lige, as he left the room, and went out into the road.

"Go on. Go on," old Peleg muttered, "I'll pay you all at once. But I must be gone, or I shall not be back in time to see the sport. When I do come back to this house, Mr. Dalton, it will be a sorry hour for you," and creeping into his rickety chaise, which stood near the house, he whipped up his skeleton of a nag, and went away muttering.

It was not long before the guests began to arrive, and as the first of them were seen by Lige approaching the house, he went

in and informed Nancy, who had just finished assisting Granny Dalton to put on her best cap, and within a few moments she was seated in grand state in the best room.

"Take a good look at me, Nancy," she said, smoothing her carefully kept black silk gown, "and see if everything is right. Are you sure my cap is on straight? It 'pears to me, that its just a leetle on one side. No? well, you know best, but I want to look as nice as I can, in honor of the dear boy. Bless him, and his pretty little wife. Oh how happy I shall be when it's all over!"

Assured by Nancy that she never looked better, and that everybody else would say the same thing, the old lady became perfectly satisfied, and, as the guests came in, received them with stately kindness, and seemed the happiest old woman in the world. When the minister arrived, who was a patriarchal looking old gentleman, nearly as aged as herself, she seemed more delighted than ever, and as he took his seat by her side, after having kindly shaken hands with everybody present, she entered into a cosy conversation with him, and told him a hundred times, if she told him once, that it was "the happiest day of her life."

Within a few minutes of the appointed time, Hiram Dalton and Creighton Herbert arrived, followed in a moment or two, by the fair young bride, her parents, and he who was shortly to be her husband. They were received with a joyous welcome, and while Mary Maythorne retires with Nancy and her bridesmaid, to make a few necessary additions to her toilet, we will take occasion to give a brief description of her and Creighton Herbert, who will occupy a somewhat prominent place in this narrative.

To begin, then, with the bride elect: Mary Maythorne was about eighteen years of age; tall and slight though well developed and graceful in figure; with a mild, sweet face which attracted sympathy and kindly feeling the moment you looked

upon it. Her eyes were blue and large, shaded by long drooping lashes, and her hair was of a beautiful golden hue, and hung in glistening ringlets over her fair shoulders. Her mouth was small, and her teeth white and delicate. No one could look at her, without seeing at a glance, that she was confiding in her disposition, and that her heart was capable of the strongest and most enduring affection. Foster Dalton was her first love. She had met him within a few months of his return from College, and though it cannot be said that at first she felt any particular interest in him, she had, at last, learned to love him, and had listened to his proposals with a heart brimful of joy and affection. She knew nothing of her lover's evil habits, nor did she for a moment dream that deceit or wickedness could dwell in his heart. Full of confidence and trust, she was about to resign her fate into his hands, without one foreboding thought, or a suspicion that he could render her life ought but a happy one.

Creighton Herbert, who, at the solicitation of Foster Dalton, was about to officiate as groomsman, was all that Lige Bates had described him. Rich, handsome, intellectual and good. He was the only son of wealthy parents, who dying soon after he attained his majority, had left him a large fortune, consisting principally of real estate in the city of New York. He had been educated to the profession of medicine, for which he had a strong predilection, and though his circumstances rendered the practice of his profession for gain unnecessary, he devoted nearly all his time by relieving, by his skill, and often by his purse, the distresses of the poor. There was no roof so humble, no man or woman so poor, as not to be worthy of the young physician's care and skill, and though he had been but a short time in Lenox, his name was already a household word in many a cottage and poor man's home.

He usually resided in the metropolis, but visiting Lenox,

the summer before, in company with a young artist, whose patron and friend he was, he had remained some time in the neighborhood, and had formed the acquaintance of Mary Maythorne, for whom there soon sprang up in his heart a warm and ardent passion. He was not long in discovering, however, that her affections were already engaged, and though he hid his real sentiments under the cold and formal guise of friendship, and often met her with a mere look of recognition, he would have given all his wealth to have thrown himself at her feet and declared his love.

Foster Dalton had no suspicion of this passion, when he asked Creighton Herbert to take part in the ceremony which should make him the happy possessor of a treasure the latter would have been too happy to call his own; nor did Creighton, by word, look or act, give him the slightest hint of the truth, but with a noble generosity, gave his hearty assent, and, in accordance with his promise, was here, present at a ceremony which was to wreck his every hope, and widow his heart forever. But there was no cloud upon his brow, no unkind feelings in his heart, he only prayed that Mary might be happy, and that Foster Dalton might prove worthy of wearing such a jewel.

While they were waiting the appearance of Mary, previous to the ceremony, Foster approached Creighton Herbert, and taking his hand, said, "I cannot resist thanking you again for your kindness, in acting as my friend on this occasion. I shall always remember it with gratitude and pleasure."

"You owe me no thanks, Mr. Dalton. Believe me, I take pleasure in adding to your happiness, and that of your lovely intended wife."

"To be sure, Doctor, I know it," said Hiram, coming up and taking him warmly by the hand. "You are a good fellow, Doctor. Ha, Foster, my boy, you ought to be a happy man. I never thought your little wife was half so pretty. Isn't she beautiful, Doctor, eh?"

"She is, indeed, Sir," replied Herbert, smothering a sigh in a smile. "I congratulate you both."

"And when are you going to be married, eh, Doctor?" old Hiram asked. "It is time you began to look about you. But I suppose you will choose a city wife, eh?"

"I have no idea of marrying any one at present," answered Herbert. "In fact, I do not think I shall ever marry at all."

"What! not marry? Pshaw! A man like you, rich, handsome, smart, and alone in the world, not marry! Ah, you will tell a different story soon."

Further conversation was interrupted by the appearance of Nancy, who summoned Foster to come and wait upon the bride.

Accordingly, young Dalton and Herbert joined Mary Maythorne and the young bridesmaid at the foot of the stairs, and the next moment, the bridal party entered the room, followed by Nancy and Lige, all smiles and excitement.

"Come here, my dear children, come here," exclaimed Granny Dalton, as soon as they came in. "Come here and let me kiss you both before you are married. Oh, I am so happy!" and as a proof of it, the old lady burst into tears.

"Bless you both," she said, "bless you! Don't mind my crying. I aint crying because I am unhappy, but my poor old heart is so full."

"There, there," exclaimed Hiram Dalton, coming forward, "don't cry any more, mother, the minister is waiting, and time flies. It is past twelve o'clock, already."

Thus appealed to, the old lady dried her eyes, and after kissing the bride on her smooth white forehead, she permitted her grand-son to lead her away, and the bridal party ranged themselves at the farther end of the room, under the direction of the venerable clergyman, who, as is customary in most country places, before commencing the ceremony, improved the oc-

casion by making a lengthy exordium, in which he spoke of the solemnity of the rite about to be performed, and gave all present a great deal of good advice.

Then turning to Foster, he asked the usual question, "Will you, Foster Dalton, take this woman to be your wedded wife, &c.?"

"I will!" answered Foster in a clear voice.

"And will you, Mary, take this man for your wedded husband?"

She was about to reply, but ere the words had formed themselves upon her lips, there was a noise in the hall, then a loud and piercing scream, and a woman's voice exclaimed, "No, no! I forbid it in the name of Heaven! stop! stop!"

All rose. The minister paused and turned towards the door, on which all eyes were fixed.

There was a trampling of feet, the crowd around the door gave way, and Peleg Bryce entered the room supporting on his arm a pale, delicate young woman, who held an infant to her breast.

"Lucy Thornton!" all cried, starting back in amazement, while a demoniac grin of satisfaction covered the hideous face of Peleg, as the woman, raising her right arm, exclaimed:

"Foster Dalton, I forbid this marriage to go on! You have no right to marry her. I have a prior claim, which I assert before God and all here, and in the name of Heaven, and in the name of Justice, I demand my right!"

"What mean you?" exclaimed Hiram.

"I mean that he has sworn to marry me; that he has sworn to do justice to the mother of his child!"

"His child!" all exclaimed.

"Speak, Foster, is this true? Speak and give the lie to this mad woman! Say that she raves."

"Ha, ha! He can't—he can't," Peleg almost screamed. "He knows it is true, and let him deny it if he dare!"

"Speak, Foster Dalton, speak!" thundered the old man, "and if you can, deny this dreadful thing."

But Foster spoke not. Turning away his head, he hissed a curse between his teeth.

"Then it is true!" shouted Hiram. "'True! stand from him all! Away! Touch him not! there is a taint upon him!" and the old man rushed towards his son, and seizing him by the arm, dragged him to the centre of the apartment.

All was confusion. Mary Maythorne, overcome with fear and grief, fainted in the arms of Creighton Herbert, and was borne from the room, followed by her parents and her bridesmaid, while the woman who had been the cause of this sudden change of scene, stood motionless, holding her child, by Peleg Bryce's side.

"Once more!" asked Hiram, seizing his son by the shoulder, and looking him in the face, with an expression of dreadful determination, "once more I ask you, is this true?"

"It is! It is!" exclaimed Lucy Thornton. "Oh, believe me!"

"Silence, woman! Answer, boy!"

"Yes, it is," said Foster, in a dogged way.

"Then, as there is a God of justice above us, you shall do her justice. You shall marry her."

"Marry her!" exclaimed Foster. "Never."

"You shall! Here, now, before these witnesses, or, if you do not, I'll have you dragged away to prison. By the law of this State, and you know it, this is a crime punishable severely, and as I live, unless you consent to take this injured woman as your wife, the rigor of the law shall fall on you."

"Here, Mr. Woodly," he continued, addressing the minister, "Make this man and woman, man and wife, and let the words be short and few."

It was done, and while Mary Maythorne lay all insensible in her bridal state, above, Foster Dalton became the husband of Lucy Thornton.

CHAPTER III.

A LITTLE over a year after the events related in the last chapter, Lucy Thornton, the wife of Foster Dalton, sat by the side of her sick infant, watching for the return of her truant husband. For two days she had not seen him; for more than a week he had not spoken to her, save in terms of anger or reproach, and her heart was well nigh broken.

"Alas!" she murmured, while the big tears coursed down her pale and care-worn cheeks, "what have I done that he should treat me thus? What can it be that keeps him from his home and from his poor sick child? I am used to neglect, for since the day when he yielded to the command of his stern father, and in fear of the law, made me his wife, he has not given me one kind look or one kind word. Oh, Heaven! what have I done, that I should suffer so? My punishment is greater than I can bear. If I did wrong in loving him as I did, and listened with too credulous ears to his vows and promises, I have repented in tears and sorrowing. But this poor child, this innocent darling. Oh, turn its father's heart towards it, and let its gentle influence bring the wanderer back."

"Drink, mamma, drink," the infant moaned, through its parched lips, and making a feeble effort to raise its head.

"There, darling, there," said its mother, soothingly, giving the poor little sufferer what it asked for. "Alas, the fever does not abate. It is nearly time for me to give the medicine the doctor ordered, and I must go to the village for it—yet there is no one to remain here while I am gone. Nancy promised to come before this. I wish she would hasten, for I dare not leave the little angel alone."

As Lucy uttered these words she rose, and leaving the cra-

dle, in which her child lay tossing restlessly, she went to the door and looked out. But Nancy was not in sight. As she passed a looking-glass which hung against the wall, she paused for a moment, and surveyed her emaciated face.

"How pale I am ! The roses he used to praise so, have all faded from my cheeks. The poor beauty which once attracted him has passed away forever. If I should fall sick too, what would become of my poor child ? Alas ! alas ! what shall I do ?"

As she resumed her place by the side of the cradle, a knock was heard at the door. She rose at once and opened it, hoping it might be her husband, but she was disappointed by the sight of Lige Bates, who stood outside with a very dejected expression upon his face.

"Good morn'n, Miss Dalton," said Lige, entering, hat in hand, and holding out one of his rough paws in a friendly way ; "be you alone ?"

"Yes, Mr. Bates, I am alone."

"Don't call me Mister Bates ; call me Lige, or Lijah, if you please. It sounds more kindly. Ye see, I've come to see you, in the first place on my own hook ; cause Nancy and me felt kinder anxious about you and the sick baby, and then when I was coming away, old Hiram Dalton, he thought he would come too ; so we left Nancy, who said she had promised to come over herself, to take care of the old lady, and me and the old man come together across lots. He's outside yonder now. He wouldn't come in 'till I had sort o' reconoitered first, as he don't want to meet that pesky cuss—. I beg your pardon. Ye see, the fact is, he don't care about seeing your husband just now."

"Yes, yes ; I understand. Tell him to come in at once, please. Tell him I am alone, and shall be so happy to see him."

Lige went to the door and shouted to Hiram Dalton, who

was standing a short distance down the road, and who no sooner heard his voice than he started on a round trot for the house, the door of which he soon entered out of breath.

"This is kind of you," said Lucy, taking him by the hand, and leading him to a seat. "Very kind."

"Bless your pale face," said Hiram, kissing her on both cheeks, and making her sit upon his lap. "I was so anxious about you, that I could not stay away any longer."

"Thanks, thanks, you are ever good."

"Well, I 'spose," said Lige, moving towards the door, "I'd better clear, hadn't I?"

"No ; stay, Lige," the old man replied, "you may be wanted."

"All right."

"And how is the little one?" asked the old man. "Better, I hope."

"No, no better. Worse, I fear. The poor darling suffers dreadfully," she answered, going to the cradle. "She sleeps now, but she will wake soon. She cannot sleep for pain."

"Poor little thing," said Hiram, leaning over the cradle, and watching the child as it lay in a feverish sleep. "It looks very bad."

"I am afraid it will be taken from me," said Lucy, the tears streaming down her cheek.

"Come, come," said Hiram, soothingly. "You must not cry, daughter ! You must not cry. Hope for the best. Don't look at the black side of things. Your fears exaggerate the danger. Have you a good doctor?"

"I think so. He gives me hope, and seems to be kind and skillful."

"Ah, there is a Doctor I wish you could get, but ——"

"Oh, I will send for any one, you think ——"

"Yes, but he is not here. He has gone to New York, and will not be back for sometime."

"Oh, you mean Doctor Herbert?"

"Yes, I wish he were here."

"I heard," said Lige, with a knowing look, that he would be back to-day. But you would not know him he is changed so. He used to be as glum as a disappointed politician, and looked as miserable as a blighted squash; but now, he's just as full of fun as a sucking pig, and looks as happy as a pedlar arter a good trade. He is going to be ——"

"Shut up," said old Hiram aside to Lige, and giving him a poke in the ribs with his elbow, "What do you want to be blabbing that out for?"

"Perhaps, when he returns, he will come in and see the baby, and he and Doctor Parker might consult together," said Lucy, anxiously.

"To be sure he will," said Hiram. "He has a heart as big as all out-doors. He'd come if he broke his neck. But I doubt his return very soon. He is gone to York on very important business. But if the child gets no better, we shall have to try and get him here. Don't look so sad. The little darling will get along without him, never fear. So don't be frightened."

"I cannot think that Heaven will take from me the only happiness and comfort I have left."

"No, no. Heaven is ever merciful. So cheer up. But I must be going now. I only came to stay a moment."

"So soon!"

"Well, you see, Lucy, child, I have a sick patient at home, myself. Poor Granny is very bad."

"Does she get no better?"

"No, and never will I fear. The poor old woman has never recovered from the shock of that dreadful day. The thought of it never leaves her mind. I believe she mourns over it even in her sleep. She loved that boy so. Her whole soul seemed

to be centered in him. She looked upon him as a model of truth and goodness, and would have died to render him happy. The knowledge of his wickedness fell upon her like a thunder-bolt, and she has never held up her head since. Heigh ho ! her grey hairs will, I fear, be brought down with sorrow to the grave."

"Alas!" exclaimed Lucy, "It was all my fault. Had I not acted so wickedly, she might have still been happy. I broke her heart, and robbed her of her darling child, and now Heaven punishes me by taking mine. Would that I had died when I lay in my cradle."

"Tush ! Tush ! Lucy. Don't talk that way. You were the dupe of a wretched, heartless, disobedient, ungrateful son. You sinned through your love and your blind faith in his truth. Heaven has pardoned you, and your child will be spared, I hope, to make its mother happy."

"But, but—" said Lucy—"even if it lives ——"

"Well, well, what more can you desire ? You have told me that Foster makes you happy. That he is good and kind, and that you have nothing to complain of."

"I do not complain."

"Is it not true ? Does he not make you happy ?"

"Oh, yes, yes ; very—very happy."

"Well, then, you have no right to wish you had died in your cradle. You ought to wish to live to make him happy in return. You are both young—life is all before you, and you must be contented to take the evil with the good. Now were it I—I might wish to be gone, for I have nothing left to live for."

"You forget your old mother."

"No, no ; I do not forget her. But her grief and mine is one, and when I say I am alone," Hiram exclaimed mournfully, "you forget, perhaps, that I still love my poor, misguided, wicked boy."

"But since our marriage he has been so much with you, he has visited you often, and ——"

"He!" exclaimed the old man, rising from the chair into which he had sank. "He? He has not put his foot across the threshold of my door, not even to see his poor old Granny!"

"How? He has told me a hundred times in leaving the house, that he was going to see you."

"Then he has lied!" cried the old man, angrily. "Lied! He has never been near me. But I don't care, I shall never ask him. If it pleases him to remain away, it pleases me. If he is proud, I am proud too, and I shall not run after him. We shall see who holds out the longest."

"But," exclaimed Lucy, anxiously, "if he does not go to your house, where does he stay so often and so long?"

"I know not," answered Hiram, angrily, "I only know that he has lied—for the mere sake of lying, I suppose. He loves me no more, because I would not encourage him in his wickedness; because I opposed my will to his, and because I forced him, as an act of simple duty, to give his child a name and keep his oaths to you. Well, the worst has happened. He cannot wound his poor old Granny's heart, or mine, more than he has, and we must bear it all as best we may."

Lucy turned away. Her heart was full. She had comforted herself with the idea that her husband, though he loved her not, had not deceived her; that he passed the time he spent away from her, at home with his father, and now that the dreadful truth broke upon her, she could no longer restrain her feelings, and sitting by her sick child, she gave way to her tears.

The old man gazed upon her for a moment, and then shaking his head and sighing, he went to her, and laying his hands upon her shoulders, said,

"Lucy. Tell me the truth."

She looked up through her tears, and hesitated for a mo-

ment, ere she rose, and throwing herself into the old man's arms, exclaimed, "He has deceived me! He will break my heart."

"Lucy!" said the old man, half reproachfully, "You, too, you have deceived me. You have not spoken the truth, when you said just now, your husband made you happy."

"Forgive me," she said. "Yes, I have deceived you, for I would have deceived myself. But I can do so no longer. The truth is too plain and I can no more resist it. I must tell you all, though it kill me. You can understand, for you loved him too, and know how he has wrung your heart. You will know how he has wrung mine, when I tell you, that since the day I became his wife, Foster has made me the most wretched of women. Not a word, not a look of affection; nothing but indifference or anger."

"The scoundrel!" exclaimed Hiram, striking his cane upon the floor with energy. "The cold-hearted villain!"

"Say, old man," said Lige, who had stood by, an excited looker-on; "Say, Mr. Dalton, a good licking would do him good. Just you let me have one chance at him, and I'll knock a little goodness into him, or a deuced sight of badness out of him."

"Hush, Lige, hush!"

"Would that you had not forced him into this marriage. I fear ——"

"Go on, go on," interrupted the old man, "tell me all, all."

"You will believe that I am wretched, when I tell you that for eight days together, he has remained away from me, without my hearing anything of him, and that now, here before you came in, I had been sitting, watching and weeping, over my poor child, for two entire days and nights, without once seeing him."

"This is dreadful. But I'll see about it. So far as I am

concerned, I would never have spoken to him again. So long as his conduct affected only me. I should have remained silent. I was resigned to his ingratitude, but since he is acting thus, since he makes you the victim of his wicked nature, I will see to it. Yes, yes, he shall find I have not forgotten the duty of a father."

"No, no!" exclaimed Lucy. "You must not! You do not know the consequences of interfering with him. Foster is so violent, and, then, besides, it would do no good. It would only exasperate him."

"Exasperate him! I ought to cane him. It is no use to allow him to go on in this way. It is wicked, and I will put a stop to it. You cannot live so, Lucy."

"But do not," Lucy went on, "do not interfere. Perhaps in time he will change."

"He? Never! The scoundrel. He will go on from bad to worse. God help me! I never come here I do not have fresh cause of unhappiness."

"It's a derved shame," exclaimed Lige, as he rocked the cradle in a fearful manner, "Gol dārn him! I'd like to have the doctoring of his case. Ef I wouldn't ——"

"Yes, yes, Lige," said Lucy. "I know you mean well enough—but you must not speak so."

"I can't help it! I feel as though I had a saw mill in my head—and my fingers itch to git hold on him, the mean, cowardly cuss. It's none o' my business, but ——"

"Then shut up!" said the old man, walking up and down.

"I can't shut up! It makes me mad. It riles all the man there is in me, to hear of a bullet-hearted, cowardly, sap-headed, card-playing, jack-turning critter, like he is, abusing his wife—a poor, mis'abul, milk-faced, slinky thing; rich as you be, I tell you I can't shut up—I feel as though I'd been apinted a committee of one to give him a rasping! There. I've had my

say, and now go in ! I'm dumb—and all I've got to say further, is, that I think, old man, you'd better keep your finger out o' the pie, unless you make up your mind to lick him, or let me do it for you. That will be the best way, and will save all further trouble."

"No, no ! Elijah, you must not interfere. It would be dreadful," said Lucy.

"Leave him to me !" exclaimed Hiram, "I won't budge, till I see him."

"Leave his punishment to God !" said Lucy, leaning over the cradle. "My darling is awake again, see how her poor little cheeks burn with this dreadful fever. And the medicine, it is time to give it to her, and ——"

"I'll git it. Where is it ?" asked Lige.

"Ah, I fear it is too late !" she exclaimed. "See, see, it gasps for breath ! Oh, God, my poor child is dying !"

"No, no," said Hiram, raising the child in his arms, "on the contrary it looks better ; see, its little forehead is quite moist. Give it a drink. It is better, I know it is !" and he gave the child to its mother, and walked up and down, exclaiming :

"The hard-hearted wretch, to leave his child in a condition like this ! Ah, he was a bad son, how could he be any thing but a bad father ?"

As he uttered these words the door opened and Foster Dalton entered the room.

His face bore marks of recent dissipation ; his dress was slovenly, and his whole appearance was that of a reckless and abandoned man.

He started on seeing his father, and then, recovering himself, he said, without a word of salutation :

"If you speak of me, you are blunt, to say the least."

"So it is you at last, boy, is it ?"

"Yes, it is me," he replied, doggedly, sitting and lighting a cigar, which he smoked in a cool and nonchalant manner.

"Promise me you will not quarrel with him," said Lucy in a low voice, appealing to the old man. "Do promise me."

"Well," said Hiram, with an effort at self-control, "if I do not speak, I must go. I will not answer for myself if I remain. Perhaps, now that I see him, it will be better for me to be silent. I will go, and take another opportunity. Good-by, daughter," he said, kissing her, "good-by, I will send Nancy over to you." Then going to his son, he said, "Foster Dalton!"

"Well, Sir!" exclaimed the young man, rising and looking at his father in a defiant manner. "Well?"

A burst of indignation was on the old man's lips, and he was on the eve of giving vent to it, but an imploring look from Lucy, checked him, and suppressing his anger, he said, "I would not smoke if I were you, your child will suffer from it. Come, Lige, let us be gone."

"Hold on," exclaimed Lige. "Hold on a minute. I can't go yet. I can't go till I have had my say;" whereupon he walked up to Foster, and doubling his fist, which looked like an over-sized ham, and shaking it in the face of the young man, he said, "See, here, Foster Dalton!"

"Well, Sir. What do you want?"

"What do I want?" he repeated; "I want to ——" but ere he could finish the sentence. Lucy placed herself between him and her husband, and Hiram taking him by the shoulders, half-pushed, half-pulled him to the door.

"I'll attend to you some other time," he shouted, as he stood upon the threshold. "What I've got to give you, won't be none the worse for keeping," and shaking his fist in the air, he allowed himself to be dragged away, muttering imprecations both loud and deep.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR some time after Hiram and Lige Bates had left the house, neither Lucy or her husband spoke a word. Foster resumed his seat, and continued to smoke his cigar in silence, then laying it down he rose and paced the room with unsteady steps. At last Lucy placed the infant, whom she had hushed once more to sleep, in its cradle, and turning to her husband, said,

"You look tired and worried, dear. Is there anything you want? Shall I prepare something to eat for you?"

"No. I need nothing. But you are mistaken, I am neither fatigued or worried."

"But you look so pale, so ——"

"It is very likely."

"You are not sick?"

"No. I am not. Is my paleness a crime?"

"Crime! no. But I feared ——"

"You need have no fears of me. I never was better in all my life," said Foster, curtly, taking up a paper and glancing over its contents.

There was silence again for some moments, and then Lucy going to him and placing her hand upon his shoulder, said, "I am so glad you have come home, Foster. I have been so anxious for our child."

"Has not Doctor been here? He told me she was getting better."

"Yes, but within the past two days, she has grown worse."

"Is that my fault?"

"And I have been all alone, for two days I ——"

"Well, I heard you. You need not repeat it. I know I have been away for two days. What then?"

"I feared, Foster, that our child might die, and you away."

"Pshaw! What was my father doing here?" he asked, removing her hand from his shoulder, and turning towards her sharply.

"He merely stepped in to see me, as he passed."

"And you were speaking of me, were you not? I interrupted a pleasant conversation, I fear."

"You know your father is one of the best of men."

"*You* ought to say nothing against him, at any rate. I suppose I caught it, did I not?"

"You heard the worst that he said, as you entered the room. He said you had been—a—but ——"

"A bad son and must be a bad husband. Yes, I heard it. You need not be ashamed to repeat it, if you could listen to it?"

"Do not be angry, Foster. You know he is hasty."

"And, I suppose, he told you I had not been to see him since our marriage, did he not? Well, he spoke the truth, I have not. What had I to do there? I should have liked to have seen the old lady, if I could have done so without seeing him; but why should I go to his house to hear nothing but reproaches or curses? I don't fancy either."

"Why have you told me so often then, that you went there?"

"Because—because," he said, hesitating at first, and then with a reckless air, "because it suited my purpose. I might as well tell you that as anything else. But what has he been doing here for the past two hours. He has been saying something—and that low-lived lout, Lige Bates, too,—what was it?"

"Nothing of moment; besides, he has not been here more than half an hour."

"Well, then, half an hour; what did he say?"

"Nothing bad of you."

"Bad or good, he shall come here no more," exclaimed Foster, rising angrily. "I won't have him here. You understand me. Tell him so."

"I cannot, Foster. Will not."

"Won't you? then I will, and plainly, too. I won't have anybody interfering in my domestic affairs. No third party has a right to do so. It always makes trouble. Let him mind his own business. He has tampered too much with mine already. I suppose he has called me this, that, and the other,—everything he could lay his tongue to—a scoundrel, a knave, a wretch! A villain—that is his favorite word—a villain! What does he want? He insisted upon our being married—and we are married. He insisted that I should do you justice. I have done you justice. I have done everything he wished. What does he want more!

"Nothing, dear Foster, nothing! He has called you no names—he has said nothing, except ——"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Foster. "Nothing bad—nothing except compliments. Oh, yes. Do you take me for a fool?"

"Oh, Foster, do not speak so. Pray do not. You make me shudder. You will kill me!" she exclaimed, falling into a chair, and weeping bitterly.

"Bah!" he ejaculated. "Tears again! Always tears!"

"How can I restrain them?"

"Then you should not have married me. It is not a prudent thing to fly in the face of Destiny, and Destiny did not intend us for each other!"

Just as he finished speaking, the door opened, and old Peleg Bryce popped his villainous red head into the room. He was uglier than ever, and as his quick eye seemed to perceive the true state of affairs at a glance, it lit up with an expression which would have done justice to the fiend of discord.

Neither Lucy or her husband saw him at first, and it was

not until he spoke, that either of them became aware of his presence.

"I hope I don't intrude," he whined, as he edged himself into the room, through the smallest possible opening between the door and the wall. "The door was open, and so I took the liberty of coming in, just to see how you both were."

"We are both well, if it is any satisfaction to you to hear it," said Foster, brusquely.

"Ha! I am glad to hear it, very glad; because I should not have thought it by your looks. You look sort o' queer, both of you."

"The baby is sick, you know, Peleg," said Lucy, "and that makes us look anxious."

"Yes, yes. I suppose so. It can't be anything else, I am sure. I just called upon my old friend and your father, Hiram Dalton, but I saw no one but old Granny. He had gone out, they said."

"Then you have missed him twice," said Foster, "for he has just left here."

"What!" exclaimed Peleg, looking at Lucy. "Just left here?"

"Yes," answered Lucy. "He has just paid us a visit."

"Indeed! What a pleasure it must have been to him to see his two children, and find them so happy together. What a comfort it must be to him. And how beautiful it is to think that the loving father and son are once more united. And what a comfort it must be to you both, eh?"

"You forget that the dangerous illness of our child—" Lucy began to say—

"Ah, it will get better! It will be well soon, and happy, too, like its father and mother. Everybody is happy now-a-days. Even Mary Maythorne."

"Mary Maythorne!" muttered Foster Dalton, while a dark cloud overshadowed his face.

"Mary Maythorne," asked Lucy. "What of her?"

"Why, haven't you heard the news? Yes, even Mary Maythorne, poor thing, has found consolation, and forgotten her first unhappy love in the arms of ——"

"Who? Who?" asked Foster, turning quickly round, and speaking in an agitated manner.

"Why, can't you guess?" said Peleg, maliciously, rubbing his ugly hands, and grinning like a hyena. "To a rich gentleman, from New York; to a handsome, smart fellow, and is going to live in a big house in the city, among grand folks."

"You don't mean to say." Foster interrupted, "that ——"

"Why are you so agitated, Foster?" asked Lucy. "This seems to interest you very much."

"Not at all, not at all—but I am curious."

"Why, who should she marry?" Peleg continued. "Who but the handsome groomsmen at your first marriage. I say first you know, because, it would have been, but for a little accident."

"Do you mean Creighton Herbert?" asked Foster.

"To be sure. He was in love with her then, and this morning he came back suddenly from New York, went right to her house, and in half an hour afterwards, to the wonder of everybody, they were married, as fast as parson Woodly could jine 'em. They leave for the city this afternoon, as happy as two turtle doves. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! how strange things do come about, to be sure."

"Married, and to him!" exclaimed Foster to himself.

"She could not have done better, you know; and she is so handsome, that rich as he is, he could not have found a wife that would do him more credit, could he?" asked old Peleg with the malice of a demon.

"I am glad of it, I am sure," said Lucy. "I hope she may be happy."

"Well," said Peleg, "I hardly know how it will turn out under the circumstances. You see ——"

"You are right, Peleg—right!" said Foster. "There is no telling whether she will be happy or not." Then turning away, he muttered to himself: "Married, and to him!"

"If Mr. Creighton Herbert," Peleg went on, "should happen to be a jealous man, well, then, there might, may-be, be trouble, and she might be very miserable after all. 'Specially if she didn't git over her first love before she took up with the new."

"Bah, man!" exclaimed Foster, "she is rich. She will live in New York, among the rich and gay. How can she be otherwise than happy?"

"Well, you see, you aint always sure, Mr. Foster."

Foster made no reply, but turning away, he took a seat in a chair near the table, and seemed to be lost in sad reflections.

Lucy watched him for a moment or two, and then going to where he sat, and standing by his side, she asked:

"Foster, of what are you thinking so seriously?"

Foster looked up, and, with evident embarrassment, said:

"I—oh, nothing!"

"Oh, Mrs. Dalton," said Peleg, with his horrid whine, "it is very natural that he should be surprised, for after all it is a strange thing, this marriage. Don't you remember, Foster Dalton, what I said, when I told you that we are never sure of anything until we've got it. I said," he went on whispering in Foster ear, "that a marriage broken off, always left one broken heart behind, eh?"

"I remember one thing, Peleg Bryce," said Foster angrily.

"And what is that?"

"That you were always known for a meddlesome old fool, and that you never fail of making yourself unpleasant and disagreeable."

"What do you mean, Foster? I'm sure ——"

"I mean that you are unwelcome—you and your news!"

"But I had no bad intentions ——"

"Do not be angry with him, Foster," said Lucy. "He means no harm."

"Then let him be quiet, if he would remain. I will not listen to his taunts."

"As you please," whined Peleg. "As you please, Foster Dalton. I sha'n't say another word, except to wish you good day. I only stopped to see how you were, and I must go home. I wish you joy—both of you—joy and happiness. Good day!" and he wormed himself out of the room, muttering, as he gained the open air:

"Well, I have sown the seed. Now to wait for the fruit. It will appear in good time."

As soon as Peleg had left the room, Lucy went up to her husband, and looking him in the face, said:

"Foster Dalton, shall I tell you why you were so agitated just now, when Peleg Bryce told you that Mary Maythorne had married Creighton Herbert?"

"What mean you?"

"It was because you still love her, and because you are jealous of her husband!"

"O, you have no right to say so. Why should I be jealous of him?"

"You are! I am sure of it!"

"You are mad."

"No, Foster, I am not mad. I was mad the day I believed your false oaths of love to me, and dearly have I expiated my folly. I see now the motive of your conduct, of your neglect, of your abandonment, your indifference, and your crime. I say crime; for it is one, to betray a loving heart as you have betrayed mine, without leaving it even the shadow of a hope. Yes, this is a crime; and you are guilty of it."

"Lucy!"

"And I, who regret that which has taken place—I, who repent this forced marriage—I, who have loved you with an undivided heart, who have sworn more than devotion, and have sacrificed my every wish and hope to you—what is left to me? How have you treated me? With insult and contempt! But, be it so. I do not regret that which I have done. I have but demanded a right which was my due after all. A right which you acceded to me, and which I took—a small portion of your existence for the whole of mine."

"Lucy!" he exclaimed, with a shout of rage. "Peace. I say!"

"I will not be peaceful! I have no fear of you. I am stronger than you! What can you do more than you have done? There is no new torture you can inflict upon me!"

"Beware, Lucy, beware! Tamper not with my wrath."

"You are right!" I should beware, for of what may not a man be capable, who, as a son, has lied to his father, as a husband, degraded his wife, and as a father, abandoned and neglected his child?"

"Silence!" he shouted, raising his hand and making a movement towards her.

"Kill me!" she exclaimed. "Kill, but I will not be silent! Though I die, I will die with the truth upon my lips!"

"Hold!" he cried, still threatening her. "I warn you. Retract that which you have said, or you have destroyed the only scruple which has bound me here. This hour I leave you, never, never to return to you again!"

"What!" she exclaimed. "No, no. You will drive me mad. Do not go! I beg your forgiveness for all that I have said. Oh, Foster, listen to me. If there remains yet, in some corner of your heart, one thought of love for me, let it plead for me now. If every spark of affection has not died out in

your soul, if you can but conjure up one kindly thought of me, left in the world alone, listen! Leave me not, for pity! I shall die if you go from me. I love you. I have spoken only from my love; because I am jealous—yes, jealous of this woman! Because I could not endure the agony which preyed upon me. Oh, I alone am to blame! With me lies all the fault! Speak to me, Foster. Husband! Do not turn away from me, as if I inspired you with hate. Listen to me! See. I am on my knees, supplicating one word of pardon, but one look of love!”

He stood immovable as a statue, while she knelt there in tears.

A cry of pain from the little one in the cradle, brought her to her feet, as she exclaimed :

“My child, my darling!” and rushing to the cradle, she took the infant in her arms. “See how pale she is,” she cried. “Ah! she is dying even now, perhaps, and you stand there like a stone, a block—without a word of consolation!”

“What shall I do,” he asked. “What can I do?”

“Do? Oh, I am mad. The medicine. I must get it. Yes, yes—but where is the prescription? I have it. Remain here till I return. Oh, God! if she should die ’ere I get back.”

And Lucy rushed from the house, leaving Foster Dalton alone with his child.

For a few moments he walked up and down, a prey to varied feelings of anger and remorse. Stopping for a moment beside the cradle where the little sufferer lay tossing restlessly, he gazed upon it, and a dark shadow veiled his face.

“What if I should dash its brains out against the wall!” he muttered. “Perhaps it would be the kindest thing I could do after all.” Then sitting in a chair by the table, and letting his chin rest upon his breast, he remained for some time in deep thought.

"Well, well," at last he muttered. "Poor Lucy, she said some hard things to me, but she is right, after all. She must be very unhappy. But is it my fault? Am I to blame if I cannot love her? Is it my fault if I cannot tear the love of Mary from my heart, this love upon which I built all my future life? Yes, dear Mary, you would have wooed me back to virtue, you would have reclaimed me from my evil ways, and you were snatched from me. They tore thee from my side, but they could not tear thy image from my heart. And now, now, you are anothers! Another has taken the place which should have been mine, and Lucy was right, when she said that I was jealous. I am! Peleg said they were going to New York—well, I will go there. I will see her. Yes, yes, I will leave to-morrow—to-day, this very hour. I will see her! I cannot resist the impulse! I know not what I shall do, but see her I must, and will. But Lucy, what will become of her? No matter what."

Again he gave himself up to reflection, and after a few moments he drew nearer to the table, and while his compressed lip bespoke the determination of his heart, he seized a pen and wrote in a hasty, nervous manner, as follows :

"LUCY,—I have gone. Do not seek for me, it will be useless ; I shalt never return ——"

Then, after a moment or two, he exclaimed : "No, no ; I cannot do it ; I cannot tell her the dreadful truth ;" and he tore the letter into fragments and cast it away. Seizing the pen again, he wrote :

"LUCY,—I have gone ! Do not seek for me, I am very unhappy.
FOSTER DALTON."

He put it in an envelope, sealed and directed it, and then, burying his face in his hands, burst into tears.

As he sat thus overwhelmed by his emotions, the door softly opened, and a good natured face, lit up by a pair of bright,

mischievous eyes, peeped in, and the next instant the comely face of Nancy Peabody was in the room. Without seeing Foster she called out, "Lucy! Lucy! Gracious sakes where be ye? Be ye deaf, or what?" then looking round hastily, she exclaimed, "What! not to hum? Hello, Mr. Foster, be ye keeping house?"

"Yes, for the present. Lucy has gone out for a moment or two."

"Well, you see, I promised to trot round and help her do up her chores and things, and here I be. Where's she gone?"

"To the village for medicine. Is the child asleep?"

"No," said Nancy, going to the cradle, "it's a squirming round like every thing!"

"Well, well, Lucy will soon return, she will bring something to quiet it. Remain here, I must go out too. Stay! When Lucy comes in, give her this note. It is a prescription. Give it to her as soon as she comes in. Do not forget it."

He handed Nancy the note which he had written and turned to leave the house. But ere he reached the door, he stopped, and rushing back, seized the infant in his arms, kissed it, replaced it in its cradle, and, without uttering a word, left the house.

"Well, what on airth is the matter with him?" exclaimed Nancy, as she busied herself about the room. "He seems to be in a bad way. What in creation made him act so, I wonder? He looked as pale as a ghost, and shook like a rag in a gale. 'Skeered about the child, I 'spose. 'Fraid it's goin' to die. Well, I am blamed if I thought he had as much heart into him. Where can Lucy be stayin' I wonder? Poor little critter, it's orful sick. Looks as slim as a match. Well, I'm concerned if some folks don't move like snails," she exclaimed, as she went to the door, and looked out for the twentieth time in the course of a quarter of an hour, "Ha! here she comes, down the road."

In a moment or two, poor Lucy, pale, out of breath, and bathed in tears, rushed in, and without seeing Nancy, went to the cradle, and falling on her knees by the side of her child, she scanned its pale face anxiously, and exclaimed, "Thank Heaven, I have arrived in time!" Then rising, she poured some of the medicine into a spoon and taking the child into her arms, she murmured :

"Oh, merciful and pitying father, spare my child! Spare my poor sick baby!"

"Foster, Foster! Look! Do you think it grows worse?" Then glancing round and seeing he was not there, she exclaimed, "What, gone? Not here! Where can he be?"

"Well, I don't know where he is," said Nancy: coming forward, "but he went just as soon as I came in."

"You here, Nancy! How kind, how good of you."

"Yes," said Nancy. "I thought I would just run over to see if I could be of any use. Foster went away as soon as I came, and left this here note for you, and told me to give it to you as soon as you came."

Lucy took the note, and after turning it over in her hands once or twice, was about to open it, when all at once, a dread fear seized her. A horror of something dreadful; a presentiment of some impending sorrow took possession of her, and she murmured, "No, no! I dare not open it! I am sure there are some evil words in it, which I dare not read."

"What's the use of being 'skeered at a note?" exclaimed Nancy. "It can't bite. He said it was a prescription. You'd better open it and see."

Thus urged, Lucy tore open the envelope and read the fatal announcement. As she did so, her face turned deadly pale. A violent tremor shook her frame, then, uttering a piercing cry, the agonized expression of a grief-stricken heart—she fell back inanimate in her chair.

CHAPTER V.

WITH the reader's permission, we will now change the scene to the city of New York, and enter the drawing-room of one of the most magnificent houses in one of the most fashionable streets of the metropolis. The apartment, or rather series of apartments, is furnished sumptuously, yet with a chaste elegance which cannot fail of pleasing the most exacting taste, and around the walls and scattered about the room, are pictures and objects of art, which bespeak the refined culture of the wealthy owner. All that can please the eye or minister to the gratification of the senses, is gathered there, and nothing is wanting to complete a picture of luxury, refinement, and cultivation.

Pacing up and down, with quick and nervous strides, is a young and handsome man, whose contracted brow and troubled look, as well as the half-uttered ejaculations which occasionally escape him, bespeak the presence of some great grief, of strong, though partially suppressed emotion.

He pauses occasionally before the picture of a beautiful woman which hangs upon the wall, at the side of the room, and gazes upon it with an expression full of affection, shadowed by a vague and anxious doubt; then resuming his walk up and down the room, he mutters to himself :

"Would I were satisfied! Oh, that I could shut this dreadful fear out of my heart and rest contented in my confidence forever more. She loves him still! She does, she must! although she has given me her hand and permitted me to call her by the sacred name of wife, something whispers me her heart is not mine. That look of regret which sometimes steals over her lovely face, those sighs which escape her, involunta-

rily, even in her happiest seeming moments, and the restraint which is evident in her manner when I press her for the cause, all confirm my sad suspicion. Can she be false to me? Oh, God! the very thought will drive me mad."

He was interrupted by a knock at the door, and a servant entered, bearing a dirty, carelessly folded note, upon a silver salyer.

"If you please, Mr. Herbert," said the domestic, approaching, "a man just left this note at the door, and said I was to give it to you immediately."

Creighton Herbert, for it was he, took the note, and after dismissing the servant, he broke the envelope and read it, as follows:

"MR. C. HERBERT—*Sir*: An old friend, who is anxious to do you a kindness, and impart some information which may be of the greatest service to you, will be on the *Ramble* in the *Central Park*, this afternoon, at *three o'clock*. Do not fail to come, as what I have to say, concerns your *honor*, as well as your happiness. PELEG BRYCE."

"Peleg Bryce!" exclaimed Herbert. "Peleg Bryce! What is he doing here, and what information can he have to impart to me? I will not go! But stay!" he exclaimed, looking over the note once more. "He says, that what he has to communicate, concerns my honor, as well as my happiness. What can he mean? Is it possible that he has something to relate which will confirm the dreadful suspicions which prey upon my peace? No, no. It cannot be. And yet, it may be possible, and if he should have it in his power to give me information, should I not listen to it, and thus end this torturing suspense? I will go! Yes, I will go!" he exclaimed again, pacing the room. "Three o'clock;" he murmured, shortly, "it is near the hour. I will start at once," and ringing the bell, he ordered the servant to inform Mrs. Herbert that he was going out, and might not return till late, and left the house.

It was a beautiful afternoon, and as Creighton Herbert stepped from the carriage on the summit of the Central Park, and gazed around him, the sight which met his eye, would have charmed him by its loveliness, were he not absorbed by the dark and tempestuous thoughts which agitated him.

In the distance lay the great city, with its spires and cupolas glittering in the summer sun, and the rumble of the ten thousand wheels, which rolled over its paved streets, fell upon the ear with a dull monotonous sound. Nearer, the workmen were busy upon the yet unfinished grounds, and close at hand, and all around, throngs of gaily dressed and happy looking people, gave animation and cheerfulness to the scene. Children were rushing here and there and playing at hide-and-seek among "the shaded walks and alleys green," and everything combined to make the place one where those who sought enjoyment and repose from the turmoil and bustle of the city might find it.

Creighton Herbert wandered amid the throng without thinking of the beauties of the place. He sought alone the man whose words might blight his hopes and render him a wretched being for evermore. After seeking for him in vain for some time, he took his place near the summit of the Ramble, and waited the appearance of old Peleg.

Within a few feet of where he sat, but hidden from his sight by a turn in the path, sat a man, still youthful, but upon whose face dissipation and vice had already stamped premature wrinkles. He was pale, and his clothes, which had been originally stylish in pattern and make, were soiled and in rags. His hat was crushed over his face, and he seemed to have fallen asleep, either from fatigue or from the effects of a late debauch. The passers by looked upon him with feelings of pity and disgust, but none spoke to him or disturbed him in his deep slumber.

As Creighton Herbert sat waiting for the appearance of

Peleg Bryce, his impatience manifested itself in various ways, and once he felt inclined to go away without listening to the promised revelation. But after a moment or two he resumed his seat, thinking, "No! spite of every thing I will hear what he has to say! I must, for I fear the worst. Mary has known this man; was betrothed to him; loved him; stood by his side to wed him. How can she love me, or why should she not still love him? That she has not forgotten him, I feel assured, and she married me, perhaps, through interest rather than from love. Would I were satisfied! Oh that I knew the worst, dreadful though the certainty of her falsehood would be."

He took out his watch; the hands pointed to the hour of three, and as he replaced it in his pocket, Peleg Bryce approached him.

There was no difference in his appearance, save that he was a little more carefully dressed than when in the country, but the same wicked, mischievous expression was upon his face, and he looked uglier than ever by contrast with the faces by which he was surrounded.

"Well, Mr. Herbert, you see I am here punctual to the hour. See," he went on, lugging out a silver watch, large and heavy enough to serve as a weapon, "three to a second. But you are more punctual than I, for you have been waiting. Well, well, I don't wonder. You are anxious."

"What do you want with me, Mr. Bryce?" asked Herbert, as the whining hypocrite took a seat by his side. "What information have you to impart to me?"

"Don't be so impatient, Mr. Herbert; all in good time, you know. Let me see. It is a long while since I had the pleasure of seeing you. But you are looking well; a little careworn, perhaps, but well—very well, considering."

"Yes, yes, I am well," said Herbert, impatiently. "But —"

"It is six months, this very day, since you were married. How time flies, to be sure! I am right, aint I? It is six months to a day."

"It is," answered Herbert, with a sigh.

"Yes, my memory is good. Well, on the day you were married; yes, on the very day, I called upon Foster Dalton and found him in the midst of a dispute with his wife. His poor little wife, that his father forced him to marry. I knew it would end in trouble. Yes, yes; and I told him so."

"Well, well."

"Oh, it was dreadful, the way he treated her. He used to stay away whole weeks together, and when he did go near her, it was only to abuse her. You see he did not love her. He loved his first intended, Mary Maythorne. He never got over the breaking off of his marriage with her."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Listen, and judge for yourself. Well, as I was saying, on the day you took everybody by surprise by marrying Mary Maythorne, I called at Foster's house and told him and his wife all about it. He heard it as he would have heard his death warrant."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Herbert. "Go on!"

"He turned pale, and sank into a chair, as if he had been shot, and then abused me, and ordered me out of the house for telling him of it. Well, that very day, he left his poor heart-broken wife and sick baby—who came very near dying, but is well now—he left them both and came to New York on the same day that you and your wife came here, and what is more, has been here ever since. Now, when you put this and this together," Peleg went on, chuckling inwardly, and rubbing his hands, "when you remember that your wife was *his* intended wife, and how she took on when the marriage was broken off, and how he was most killed when he heard that she

had married you, and how he left and followed her on to New York that very day, why ——”

“No more, no more,” exclaimed Herbert, rising. “Are you sure of this—sure that he is here?”

“Am I sure? It’s hard to fool old Peleg Bryce, I can tell you. Sure? As sure as I have eyes and ears, for I have seen him and heard him speak. Now, Mr. Herbert, or Doctor Herbert—I ’spose I ought to say. Understand me—I don’t want to make any fuss, you know, or make you jealous; but Foster Dalton is capable of everything, and though I do not say a word against your wife—because I don’t know that she has seen him—still you know I thought it would be as well for you to be on the look out, for women folks is strange critters, sometimes. I should be drefful miserable if any thing should be wrong, and so ——”

“Do you know whether this man has seen my wife?”

“No. I tell you, I don’t. But I believe he came here for that purpose. You may judge of the man by what he has done. Why should he abandon his wife and child, or why ——”

“Say no more,” said Herbert turning away his face, to hide the strong feelings which his looks betrayed. “Say no more!” Then he thought, “Can this man have some sinister object in thus filling my mind with suspicion? He once offered himself to Mary, and she refused him for Foster Dalton ——”

“Peleg Bryce,” he said once more turning towards him, “tell me frankly, what motive are you serving in this matter, and why have you sought me for the purpose of relating these things?”

“With what object? Why?” answered Peleg, “Because I love honesty and despise treachery. I don’t take any pleasure in making you uneasy in your mind. But you are a good honest man, and it aint right you should be abused. I wanted

to do you a good turn, and I hope you will take the will for the deed. When you have need of me or of my eyes and ears, you can send for me again. I am going to stay in York awhile. I am tired of living about home. Folks around there don't kind o' like me, and I thought I'd come down to York for a change of scene, and to ses the sights."

"He seems honest," thought Herbert. "I do not know why I should suspect his motives. But I will not act too precipitately. I will watch and learn more. Oh, God, should she have deceived me all this time!" Then turning to Peleg, he said, "I am obliged to you, and will ask you to keep your eye upon this man. When you learn anything more of him or of his movements, let me know, and—but I must leave you now."

"Well, I won't press you to stay," said Peleg, holding out his hand, which Herbert took mechanically in his. "Remember what I have said, and think over it. Women are smart, you know, and I will keep my eyes open, too, and let you know when I hear or see anything."

"Well, well. Good-bye, now," said Herbert. "But stay," he said, taking out his purse, "I cannot ask you to remain here at your own expense to serve me. "Let me ——"

"Not a cent, Mr. Herbert. Not a cent, Sir. Peleg Bryce has got more money than he'll ever live to spend—I don't do this for pay."

"As you please. Adieu." And Creighton Herbert walked away, a prey to the most poignant feelings of fear and distrust.

While this conversation was taking place between Peleg and Herbert, a man dressed in a gay and rather flashy manner, had passed and repassed them several times, and as Herbert went away, he followed him at a distance, and watched him until he entered the carriage and was driven off; then, returning, he paused in front of the man who sat asleep, and after satisfying himself that he still slumbered, he strolled off and

lighting a cigar, leaned against one of the benches and watched the passers by, with a dull, languid air.

Left to himself, old Peleg Bryce wandered up and down the path, rubbing his hands and smiling at his thoughts, which must have been wicked, or they would not have pleased him.

"A pretty good day's work," he muttered, as he turned his steps towards home, "a pretty good day's work! I have done Mr. Herbert a favor, and paid two debts together. Pretty Mary will be no happier for what her husband knows, and Mr. Foster Dalton will be foiled at any rate. Ha! ha! You despised me, rejected me, but after all, perhaps, you'll find, my good girl, that you would have been quite as well off as the wife of old Peleg!"

As he walked on and was about turning the corner of a path, a young countryman, who was gaping about, approached him from a side path, and speaking behind him, asked:

"I say, Mister, won't you tell a feller where the cave is?"

Old Peleg turned round and found himself standing face to face with Lige Bates.

The astonishment written in both their faces evidenced their mutual surprise at the unexpected meeting.

Lige was the first to speak.

"Git eout!" he exclaimed, taking a step back, and surveying Peleg from head to foot. "You don't mean to say it's you, you derned old red wolf?"

"The devil take him," thought Peleg, but he held out his hand, saying: "Well, who would have thought of seeing you Lige Bates? Why what has brought you to York?"

"Well, I reckon that is my business," replied Lige, declining the proffered hand. "I recon I aint responsible to you for my comings and goings, be I?"

"Well, you needn't be so short. You are not the first smart young man who came to the city to find out he was a fool!" said Peleg, with a sneer.

"Well, what are you doin' here, if't comes to that. No good, I'll bet a fo'pence?"

"As you say to me, that is my business, Lige. Don't you mix yourself with my affairs."

"Well, I cal'iate," responded Lige, putting his hands in his pocket, and looking Peleg steadily in the face, "that will depend on circumstances. I kind o' allow, that if you are dabblin' in certain matters, you'll find me pretty close on your heels the hull time. Kind o' 'pears to me, that a sort o' special providence chucked you in my way, any how."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, I mean a heap! Gol darn that viperous looking face of your'n, it sets my blood to bilen' all over, and if I don't tell you what's into my mind, I shall bust. I've been a hankering to spit it out for a long time, and I reckon I'll improve the occasion, as parson Woodly says. You know I don't like you, Peleg. I recon you aint surprised at that, for there ain't many that does. You're a deuced treacherous, two-faced, pisonous, mischievous old cuss! I know you, and what you have done, and being so well posted in you, I'm going to keep my eye skinned for you all the time."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you'll find out if you live long enough. I owe you one for all the mischief you've done in the Dalton family. Oh, you needn't look so black. I kin catalogue your works!" Lige exclaimed, as Peleg moved away, and following him up closely. "I know all you've done! You was mad because Mary Maythorne wouldn't have you, and ever since you've made nothing but mischief. You made Foster Dalton run away. You set him on and stirred up the devil in him. I've heered on it, and you're a followin' him up now, for some ornery reason or another!"

They were standing just opposite to the man who sat sleep-

ing on the bench, and as Lige uttered these last words, the sleeper awoke, and rubbing his eyes, looked wildly about him, while Lige went on without seeing him.

"What on earth would she have done with you? Do you suppose, if I had been a young girl, I wouldn't a thousand times rather have married Foster Dalton than you, you derved old red rhinoceros?"

The man, who had been asleep, half rose, here, as if he would have slunk away, but seemed to change his mind, for he sat down again and pulled his hat further over his brow, and folding his arms, remained motionless.

"Bah!" ejaculated Peleg. "You snarl like a dog. But barking dogs never bite. What do you mean by quarreling with me in this way?"

"Can't you understand? Lucy has let me into all your tricks, both before her marriage and after. She has told the secret to me, but I aint afraid to tell it to you, 'cause I know you'll keep it."

"Peace, fool!" cried Peleg. "Peace, I say! I won't bear this! I won't listen to you! I'll choke you!"

"You can't help yourself. I aint afraid of you. If I am a barking dog, I aint skeered of a hissing snake!"

"If you go on you'll see," exclaimed Peleg, almost beside himself with rage.

"See? See what? You can't skeer any body. You were the cause of breaking off Mary Maythorne's marriage because she rejected you, and you threw Lucy Thornton in the way of Foster Dalton, and plotted her ruin and his villainy."

"It's a lie!" exclaimed Peleg, trembling with rage. "It's a lie!" and raising his cane, he advanced to strike Lige, who stood ready to spring upon him. But just as the cane was about to descend, the man whom we have spoken of, started to his feet and threw himself between the two beligerants, exclaiming, "Hold!"

Both Lige and Peleg started back in fright and astonishment, for there, between them, pale, emaciated, in dirt and rags, stood Foster Dalton.

"Foster Dalton!" they exclaimed together, when the first shock of surprise had passed away.

Foster looked first at one, and then at the other for a moment, then in a hoarse, husky voice, said: "Peleg Bryce, all that this honest fellow has said is true, and you know that it is! You dare not deny it before me. Many a time have I thought to pay you for the treacherous part you have acted towards me. I know you for a coggling, malicious, designing scoundrel, and now that we meet here—now that I am so lost and degraded that I can no longer disgrace myself by a quarrel with you, I intend to punish you. Yes, you white hearted craven, your time has come!" and, with a sudden spring, he leaped forward and seized Peleg by the throat.

But with the exertion his strength deserted him, his grasp relaxed, and he fell forward to the earth.

"You would not kill old Peleg would you?" Bryce exclaimed, as he stepped aside.

"Kill you? aye! if my strength had not failed me," said Foster, as Lige picked him from the ground and supported him to the bench upon which he had been sleeping. "I would ——" but ere he could finish the sentence, he fainted, and fell fell back senseless.

"Why, Foster! Foster Dalton!" exclaimed Lige, "what's the matter? Sake's alive, he's fainted!"

"I wish he was killed," muttered Peleg. Then, as a number of people began to gather round, he cast a malicious gaze upon Foster, and mixing with the crowd, soon disappeared.

By the aid of one or two kindly persons, Lige succeeded in restoring Foster to consciousness. He no sooner recovered his senses, than raising himself and looking round, he asked, "Where is he? Where has he gone?"

"Oh, he's sneaked off, like a mean cuss, as he is!" answered Lige, "and I'm glad of it. He aint worth killing, anyhow. But how do you feel? Better?"

"Yes, better, better. A vertigo seized me. But how is it I find you in New York?"

"Oh, me?" said Lige, evidently much embarrassed by the question. "Well, I tho't I'd just run down for a day or two. Harvest is over, and it was kind o' dull, and as I'd never been to York, I cal'iated I'd take a little mite of a trip. But you, you, Foster. How is it I see you in such a fix as this? I recon things don't go very peart with you, do they?"

"Alas, no!"

"Are you contented? Be you happy?"

"How can I be happy again on earth?" exclaimed Foster." "But leave me Lige, I am better. I do not require your assistance any more."

"But have you no questions to ax about ——"

"Whom?" asked Foster, interrupting him.

"Well, of the—the folks?"

"What of them?"

"*She* is very wretched ——"

"And so am I."

"He's as tough about the gizzard as ever," thought Lige.

"Are you not cold?" asked Foster, shivering. "I am."

"Cold? Why it's as hot as pepper. I'm perspiring like an ox."

"I am cold even to my marrow!"

"Poor cuss, he's sick, I recon," Lige thought to himself. "But it's no use for me to stop talking to him here. I'd better run and tell the old man and Lucy all about it. I'll find out where he lives first if I can, though. Well, I've got to clear," he said, aloud. "But I'd like to see you again. Where do you hang eout?"

"I have no lodging place. Here ! the streets—they are my home now !"

"I don't believe it," thought Lige. "But I'll keep on the look out for him. The old man has a clue to his place any how." "Well," he said, aloud, "I live in Bowery street, No. 866, up three pair of stairs, room No. 25, if you want to see me, you kin hear of me there, if I aint to hum. If I can help you, let me know. You aint got no message nor nothing, have you ?"

"No, but stop ! Here !" and he wrote something with an unsteady hand on a piece of dirty paper, which he took from his pocket. "If you do not hear from me within three days, look for me in the place I have indicated, and now leave me."

"Well, good-bye," said Lige, putting the paper in a large yellow wallet, with as many straps to it as you would find in a double harness. "Good-bye, I'll see you again."

Foster made no reply—and Lige, after giving him a look of commiseration and shaking his head mournfully—turned on his heel, and made the best of his way towards the city.

"How weak I am," muttered Foster, still sitting on the bench where we found him. "Curse on my shattered nerves ! A moment since, I held my evil genius, the curse of my life, by the throat, and he escaped from my grasp ! It was he who has been the cause of all my misery. I would have choked the life out of his pestiferous carcase, had I but one-half the strength I used to have. But my rage rendered me powerless. No wonder ! I have eaten nothing in three days, and I am starving. Yes, starving, dying, I fear. But why fear it ? What is there left for me but to die, and the means are ready ? A little courage, and all will be over !"

He sat a moment in deep thought, and then compressing his lips, with an expression of desperate determination, he took a pistol from his breast, and cocking it, raised it partially

to his mouth: but midway, his hand paused, and then fell by his side.

"Why should I fear?" he muttered. "I am poor, weak, and wretched. In six months I have squandered everything—not a penny is left to me in the world, not a friend—oh, Mary, Mary—you are the cause of all! But for this fatal passion—I cannot die without seeing you. I will wait one day longer, and then all will be over." Replacing the pistol in his breast, he continued to reflect, in silence, and in the meantime, the man who had followed Creighton Herbert to his carriage, and who had watched Foster Dalton as he slept, had advanced silently to within a few paces, and stood watching him. As Foster put away the pistol, a look of satisfaction stole over his face, and walking stealthily towards him, he placed his hand gently upon his shoulder.

Foster started at the touch, and rising, confronted the new comer.

"Well, tempter!" he exclaimed, "have you not abandoned me yet?"

"No," responded the man. "Eight days ago, just about this hour, I saw you sitting before the green cloth of the Faro table. You played like a madman, blindly, recklessly, and you lost your last dollar. Ever since you have been flat broke—entirely without resources, no money, nor friends, I doubt whether you have had enough to buy your food."

"Well, I have not begged of you, Wharton, have I? I have not whined."

"No," answered the man, "not to me. But you were going to blow your brains out, just now, because you have not the means of going to the gambling-table once more."

"You are mistaken, Wharton, I play no more. Would play no more, if I had millions. I have played—it has been my passion, my ruin. I played not to win, but to distract my

thoughts. I hoped one passion would drive out another. I tried it. It failed, and there is an end of it."

"I do not understand you," said the man whom Foster had called Wharton. "Just now you were going to raise your hand against your own life. That was folly. I was glad to see you thought better of it. Don't give way to such weakness again. Why should you die? Rather commence a new existence. It is easy, if you will follow my advice, and take advantage of the means I offer you."

"I will not listen to you. Leave me!"

"You are ungenerous, Dalton, to refuse the kind offers of a friend."

"You my friend, you! Do you take me for a fool?"

"Certainly, I am your friend. Did I not take you by the hand, when you first arrived in the city? Was I not your guide and counsellor? Did I not introduce you to the gay world, to all the charms and pleasing dissipations of the town?"

"Yes, and to my present misery and degradation."

"You are ungrateful."

"Again, I say, leave me, Wharton. I will not hear you. You would tempt me to greater disgrace, to deeper ruin!"

"Pshaw! man, don't be a coward. Come, follow the road I point out! You know what it is, and to what it will lead. There is not one chance in a hundred against you. I have given you the idea, execute it. I will be the head, and you the arm of our enterprise."

"What is it you wish me to do?"

"It is very simple; it is only to demonstrate to a man whom I met here this very afternoon, and whom I will point out to you, that the goods of this world are unequally distributed, and that you should possess a share of what he has."

"But this is robbery. Theft!"

"Mere words! The man who takes a kingdom is a hero; the man who takes a purse is a thief."

"I will have nothing to do with it; I refuse now and forever. Leave me!"

"As you please. I needed help, you needed money. I thought we could strike a bargain. If you refuse, so much the worse for you, and I must look somewhere else. You prefer to starve. Well, each to his taste, and I bow with profound respect to your exalted honesty. I am sorry for you, however. Good day!" and the man walked off.

For a moment Foster stood hesitating, then, as if impelled by some new impulse, he called out:

"Ho! Wharton—a word!"

"Have you changed your mind?" asked Wharton, returning to him, "I thought you would not play the child."

"I have not accepted yet."

"No, but you will. Come, let us go away together, and discuss the matter over a good supper. That will put a little pluck in you. Then, if you agree to seize the prize Fortune holds out to you, meet me at midnight, on the corner of Twenty-fourth street and Madison avenue, and I'll show you a way to live like a prince for a year to come. Come!" and, without a word, Foster allowed him to lead him away.

They went a short distance towards the summit of the Park where Wharton summoned the driver of a coach that stood near, the door of which being opened, he pushed Foster in, and following himself, gave the driver his directions, and in a few moments they were on their way to the city.

CHAPTER VI.

ON the evening of the day, next to that upon which the events described in the last chapter took place, Creighton Herbert sat alone in a small apartment of his elegant house. It was the one usually occupied by his wife during the day, and being situated at the back of the building, was retired and quiet. The furniture, though costly, was plain, and the place bespoke the presence of a woman who preferred comfort to show. At one end of the room stood a toilet, before a large mirror, beside which, a window extended nearly to the floor. A door on one side led into the principal hall, and another opened into a sleeping apartment.

Herbert occupied a large, easy chair, in the centre of the room, and sat rocking himself unquietly to and fro. At last he rose and rung the bell. A waiting woman made her appearance, of whom he enquired whether his wife had yet gone down into the drawing-room.

"Not yet, Sir," answered the domestic.

"Say that I await her here."

"Yes, Sir," and the girl left the room, while Herbert once more gave himself up to his sad thoughts.

"I cannot mix with our guests, I fear," he murmured, "without betraying myself. Ah, they little think, that surrounded as I am, by all that wealth can procure; by every external means of happiness and enjoyment, what a wretched heart beats within my breast. I would give all this luxury and wealth for one sincere, loving smile from her. Oh that I could banish the past from my remembrance! But, after all, may I not be wrong? What is it to me, even if Foster Dalton is here? If he does not see Mary, what harm to me?

The fact that he loves her still, proves nothing against her. No, no! I ought not to doubt her!"

At this moment Mary entered the room. If she was beautiful when we first saw her, about to plight her vows to Foster Dalton, how much more so was she now, that two years had served to develope her beauty and mature the charms which then were but budding? The elegant, though modest, dress she wore, set off her magnificent figure to the very best advantage, and she looked fit to reign the queen of a palace. She looked pale, and wore, in spite of her apparent efforts to seem tranquil, an anxious look, and as she entered the room, a gentle sigh escaped her.

"You have asked for me," she said.

"Yes, yes, Mary," Herbert replied. "Is it not time you were in the drawing-room? Your guests will soon be here."

"I am not well to-night."

"Indeed! One would not think so to look at you. You seem more beautiful than ever."

"You always flatter me," she replied, taking a seat and playing with the plain gold ring which encircled her finger.

"I wish we were to be alone, to-night," she went on. "I dread the task of appearing to be gay. I much prefer this quiet little room, to all the splendors down stairs."

"You love solitude, Mary."

"Am I wrong for doing so?"

"No, but to sit alone, nursing gloomy thoughts ——"

"My thoughts are not gloomy, always, Creighton, though I am happier out of the gay world, particularly when I feel as I do to night. I received a letter from my father this morning."

"Indeed! You didn't mention it before. What is the news? Are they all well in the country?"

"Father is very unhappy."

"Mary, I have observed that whenever you receive news

from home, you seem as you are to-night, thoughtful and sad. Does the result of a letter from home, call up unpleasant remembrances?"

"Creighton!"

"Oh, do not deny it, Mary. You know that I am resigned."

"I assure you, that the only reason for my sadness is, that my poor father is unhappy."

"Why, then, does he not come to live with us? Twenty times I have asked him, and he still refuses."

"He is old, you know, and does not like change."

"And, why do you not add, he does not like me?" He never looked upon our union with pleasure. You are right; he does not like change!"

"You have promised not to refer to this subject."

"I cannot help it. It is your indifference which calls it up, and which makes me continually regret having forced this marriage upon you."

"You are cruel to speak thus. Why do you think I am not satisfied?"

"Satisfied! Yes, as well as with any one, perhaps, except Foster Dalton."

"Foster Dalton! Never mention that name again to me, Creighton Herbert, if you respect me."

"See! See!" he exclaimed. "What can I think when even the mention of his name flushes your cheek, and makes you weep? What! Weep before the eyes of your husband, at the mention of your old lover's name! You love him still, Mary. You do! You do!"

"'Tis false!" she cried, rising. "I do not. Have not since that terrible day!"

"Why, then, do you sigh and weep? Why do you seem so wretched, under such restraint?"

"Because you make me weep; you put this restraint upon

me. Because you are continually reminding me of what I would fain forget. I weep, because, knowing you to be the most worthy of men, I would love you as you deserve to be loved, and you throw my love back upon me."

"Forgive me!" he cried. "Pardon me! Weep no more, but listen! I am not so culpable as you think. I love you so much that, I confess it, I am jealous! Oh, if you knew what joy it would be to me, to hear you say, 'I love you!' O, how happy, how rich I should be then! But I have been mad. Mad to dream that you had for me more than a cold esteem! I thought I could blot out from your heart the remembrance of your first passion—this fatal love which will kill us both. Him and me, for as I live, I will kill this man!"

"No, no, Creighton!" she cried. "Do not speak so. Banish this horrid thought from your mind, and banish with it every fear of me. Do not commit an act which would destroy your peace of mind forever, but live on peacefully, trusting in me and in my love. Listen! You reproached me just now, with being sad. Do you know its cause? It is my absorbing love for you, which banished every other thought from the heart which you fill entirely. Your sadness has made me think you loved me not, and this thought, and this alone, has made me wretched. Come, let us date from this hour our perfect happiness. Let us have faith in one another! You will see how the assurance of your love shall drive away all gloom and sadness from my face. Let us live in the present and the future, and never again give a thought to the past!"

"Do you, indeed, speak the feelings of your soul? Is this, indeed, the truth?"

"Ah, Creighton, falsehood can never spring from love."

"True, true!" he exclaimed, taking her to his heart. "We will forget all! We will live in the present and in the future. Henceforth, I banish every doubt and fear. Oh, Mary, Mary,

you have raised my soul from the depths of despair to the pinnacle of joy and hope!"

It would have been like a dagger in the heart of Peleg Bryce, could he have seen the smile which lit up both their faces; could he have seen the kiss of love with which Creighton Herbert sealed this happy compact, and have heard the words of mutual forgiveness which fell from their lips during the next five minutes. At the end of which time, the waiting woman came in to inform Mary that her guests were already arriving.

"Will you wear your new necklace, madame?" she asked.

"What necklace?"

"Oh, never mind to-night, Rose—not to-night. Some other time," said Herbert, somewhat embarrassed.

"What is it? What new necklace?" Mary enquired.

"A mere bagatelle," Herbert replied. "A trifle I took a fancy to the other day. I thought you might like it——"

"What! a present from you? Oh, let me see it. Bring it to me. Where is it, Rose?"

"In your room, madame."

"Then come, Rose, come. Let us look for it. Thanks, Creighton, thanks. You called me beautiful, just now. I would be more beautiful for your sake. Come, Rose, come." And she left the room gaily, followed by the waiting woman.

"This is like a dream," exclaimed Herbert, when left alone. "How wicked of me even to doubt her."

In a short time she returned with the brilliant bauble glistering on her lovely neck, and going to Herbert, she placed her hand in his, saying: "From this hour my life begins."

He made no reply, but drawing her to him, he pressed her to his heart, imprinted a warm kiss upon her fair brow, and drawing her arm through his, led her to the drawing-room.

Among all her guests that night, and there were many there

who were called beautiful, none were so lovely, so joyous, so happy as Herbert's fair wife; and after all had departed, and they were left once more alone, Herbert, addressing her, said, "I should not have known you, dear Mary. You were a different being."

"You see what mutual confidence will do," she answered. "Let us be ever thus, and earth will be a heaven to both."

Previous to this, and while they were still in the drawing-room, where a few guests still lingered, a man, who made his appearance late in the evening, and who had stood aloof from the rest, taking no part either in the conversation or the various festivities, remained alone in the dressing-room. Herbert had noticed him, once or twice, during the evening as being a stranger to him, but had thought nothing of the circumstance, believing him to have been brought there by some friend, who had neglected to introduce him, and once or twice he had been on the point of addressing him, but something had as often prevented it.

He sat quietly in the dressing-room for some moments, and then opening the door, he listened. All was still, and he came out into the hall on tip-toe, and proceeded cautiously to the room in which we found Herbert sitting early in the evening.

Entering stealthily, he looked around: "This is the room where she keeps her jewels, and the plate is not far off. All right." Then going to the window he looked out, and gave a low whistle, to which, however, there was no response.

"Confound the fellow, he is not there!" he muttered. "I hope he won't get chicken-hearted just at the very pinch. However, here goes to prepare the way, at any rate." And taking a ladder of small, yet exceedingly strong silken rope from his pocket, he fastened one end, by means of a powerful clamp, to the sill outside, and allowed the other to fall into the yard below.

"The right length to a foot!" he muttered. "A good measurement. Now to get out of this and stir up that fellow to the sticking point."

He left the room as noiselessly as he had entered it, and passing the servants in the hall, went into the street and proceeded to the corner above, where another person stood, evidently waiting for him.

"I have changed my mind, Wharton," said Foster. "I will have nothing to do with this affair. The very thought of it drives me almost mad."

"Pshaw! man," urged Wharton; "don't be a fool. Everything is prepared, and the thing may be done without a risk. You have only to climb the ladder, seize the jewels and plate, and before any alarm can be given, be off. Once in the street, you are all right."

But it was some time 'ere Wharton succeeded in removing the scruples from the mind of his companion. He succeeded at last, however, and the two moved away together.

Mary sat in her own room, alone. She had removed the necklace and the other brilliant and costly gems, which she had worn that evening, and placed them near a handsome jewel casket, which stood upon the table near the window.

Her face was radiant with happiness, for the most cherished wish of her heart had been gratified. She felt confident that she possessed the undivided heart of her husband, and knew that every doubt of her had passed from his soul.

"I can scarcely realize the joy I feel," she thought. "It seems like a dream. A moment has sufficed to change the whole aspect of my life. What misery we have both endured in thus foolishly doubting the loyalty of each other's hearts. Poor Creighton, how he must have suffered under this dreadful suspicion. But he will suffer no more, my whole life shall be devoted to making him happy. How beautiful those dia-

monds are. How kind of him to bring them to me, even when he thought I did not love him !”

“A slight noise outside of the window startled her, and she rose nervously, and went towards the door. Then pausing, she smiled at her own fears, and coming back, resumed her seat. “What a coward I am !” she murmured. “Every little noise makes me tremble like a leaf. Surely no evil can happen to me to-night.”

She was sitting with her back to the window, which was open, and as she uttered the last words, Foster Dalton placed his foot upon the sill, and glided noiselessly into the room. His quick eye glanced round the apartment, and he seemed surprised to see it occupied. His first impulse seemed to be to retreat, but in a moment he altered his mind, and raising his hand to the gas-burner by the side of the mirror, he turned out the light ; and snatching the diamonds and the casket from the table, as he did so, placed them in his breast.

Mary uttered a quick, sharp cry, and, as if by instinct, seized the robber by the arm.

“Call not,” Foster said, in a hoarse whisper. “Do not give the alarm ! I will go ! Yes, yes, I thought I could commit this deed, but I cannot. Speak not, and no harm shall befall you.”

“Oh, Heavens ! Help, help !” she cried. “Oh, Creighton ! Husband ! quick. Quick !”

“Great God ! that voice !” Foster exclaimed. “Where am I ?”

As he spoke, Creighton Herbert, followed by the servants, bearing lights, burst open the door, and entered the apartment.

“What is this ?” he cried.

“Great Heaven !” Mary exclaimed, starting back in fear. “Foster !”

“What !” shouted Creighton, “Foster Dalton !” and taking a pistol from his breast, pointed it at Foster’s heart.

"Oh, do not kill him, husband! Spare him!" cried Mary, seizing Herbert's arm.

"Spare him, madam! Spare him, your lover; alone in your apartment in the dead of night?"

"Great Heaven!" Mary exclaimed. "Ha! I see it all. Oh, have mercy on me! Do not kill him, let him speak and exonerate me from this dreadful charge!" and with a desperate effort, she grasped the pistol which her husband held, and snatching it from him, threw it to the further end of the apartment.

In the meantime, Foster had stood as if struck motionless and dumb. His face gradually lost all expression, and he looked around him with a vacant stare. Then, as Mary snatched the pistol, his eye lit up for a moment, and he exclaimed: "Where am I? Ah! I know. I am a robber, a thief!" and taking the diamonds which he had thrust into his bosom, he cast them on the floor, as he exclaimed, "Yes, I am a thief; but I knew not who I came to rob. There are the jewels! Take them! Ha! I choke! I burn! I suffocate! Ha! ha! ha!" and with a maniacal laugh, he rushed to the window, and, ere Creighton could seize him, disappeared.

"Follow him by the back door—quick!" shouted Herbert, rushing from the room. "But do not injure him upon your lives!"

"Oh, Herbert, stay! Hear me!" screamed Mary. "I—I——" but her energies failed her, and she sank on the floor fainting.

CHAPTER VII.

LIGE BATES, after having imparted to Lucy, who had accompanied him to the city in hopes of finding and reclaiming her misguided husband, the account of his interview with him, had gone once more in search of Foster Dalton, and while the events just related were taking place, he was returning dejected and weary from his fruitless errand.

Entering a large house, in the upper part of the Bowery, he climbed with slow steps, the various flights of stairs, until he reached the apartment which he occupied, and opening the door, he flung himself into a chair, exclaiming, "Well, I kin do no more. You might jist as well try to find a needle in a haystack as t' find anybody in this derned overgrown town. What on earth shall I say to Lucy? I thought I should fetch

her good news. Well, there's no use talking, she's got to know the worst, and she might as well know it fust as last!"

He rose from his chair and going into the hall knocked at the door of a neighboring room, and in answer to his summons Lucy appeared.

"Well, Lige, you have returned. Not alone I hope?"

"Yes, Miss Dalton, alone; replied Lige, entering the room and taking a seat, "I can't find nor hear nothing of him. I went to the place he wrote down, and they had never heard of sich a person. I spose he must a' changed his name. I have axed all sorts o' questions, of all sorts o' people. Some laughed at me; some sent me on a fool's errands to the wrong places, and some seemed to think I was crazy. I chaced all the way up to the Central Park, where I saw him the other day, but it warn't of no use, and then I tried to find that pesky old villain, Peleg Bryce, but I couldn't find him neither, and I've cum back just as wise as I left, and as tired as a mill-horse!"

"My last hope is then gone!" said Lucy, dejectedly. "All is over now! I shall never see him again."

"Oh, I don't mean to give it up! I'll take another look to-morrow. Trust in Providence, Miss Dalton."

"Alas! I have lost all trust. My heart tells me he is lost to me forever. I shall go home to-morrow, and, if I can, forget him. But his poor father, he returned too, but a short time ago, from an unsuccessful search for his son, and has gone to bed nearly heart-broken!"

"Well, I recon I'd better do the same thing," said Lige, "for I can't hardly stand on my legs, I am so tired. You kin call me, you know, if anything happens."

"Yes, yes, Lige, go to bed. You have been very good to me. I shall never forget how kind you are."

"Don't say nothing about it," said Lige, "I'd do a heep more for you than I have, and I'm going to find Foster yet. So keep a stiff upper lip up, and good night."

Entering his room once more, he threw himself upon the bed without removing his clothes. Five minutes had not elapsed, however, and he had hardly began to lose himself in sleep, ere the sound of footsteps ascending the stairs, caused him to start up in bed and listen. The sounds came nearer and nearer.

Some one was coming up stairs, at the top of his speed. At last the person, whoever it was, stopped upon the landing, and then footsteps approached his door. In another moment it opened with a crash, which brought Lige to his feet, and seizing a chair, hastily, he raised it above his head, just as a man bounded into the room. Lige was about to fell the intruder to

the floor, when in the miserable frightened being before him, he recognized Foster Dalton, and started back in surprise.

"What. Foster!" he exclaimed, putting down the chair and going to him.

"Yes, yes. Hide me, quick. Quick! They will be here soon, hide me, for pity's sake."

"Hide you?"

"Yes, yes, quick, or I am lost! Hush! do not speak loud, or they will hear and find me. Talk in whispers."

"What is the matter? What have you done?"

"I do not hear them," Foster said, going to the door softly, and looking out wildly. "They have got off my track."

"Who? What? What in thunder has happened?"

"Hush! I will tell you by-and-by," said Foster, still listening at the door.

"He's as crazy as a loon," thought Lige. "I never saw such eyes in any crittur's head. It won't do to let Lucy see him in this fix, it would kill her. What in the name of the Constitution, be I going to do with him?"

"You are astonished to see me, eh, Lige?" whispered Foster, with a grin, which showed reason was fast deserting him.

"Yes, I be," said Lige. "But I am glad to see you, too. Though what in the name o' thunder I'm going to do with you, I'm derved if I know."

"I'll tell you, Lige. Hide me! I must stay here till the search is over."

"The sarch! Who's a sarching you and what fur?"

"Yes, yes; they are looking for me. But they must not find me. You must keep me quiet, hush! Hark. I hear some one coming. Do you not hear their footsteps on the stairs? There are several of them. They are coming this way!"

"I hear somebody that's a fact," said Lige, closing the door and placing his back against it. "But there aint but one man."

"Oh, hide me, quick, or I am lost," exclaimed Foster, in piteous accents. "If they come in and find me they will take me to prison. To prison! do you hear?"

"To prison! but what for? What on earth shall I do? There aint room to hide a cat here," said Lige, perplexed in the extreme.

"Ha! it is too late!" Foster exclaimed, as some one knocked at the door. "Too late. They are here."

"I must," said Lige to himself, "here, git under the bed, and be quick about it. 'Who's there?' he asked, as the knocking at the door was repeated. 'What do you want?'"

"Open quickly!" said a voice from the outside.

"I can't, I'm abed and fast asleep!" Lige replied, hardly knowing what he said, and keeping his broad shoulders more firmly against the door.

"Open! it is a friend! I come to save him!"

"A friend!" said Lige to himself. "Whether it is or not, it aint no use to resist!" and he stepped away from the door, which yielding to the pressure outside, opened, and Creighton Herbert entered the room.

Foster was standing by the bed pale with fear, and when he saw Herbert he made an effort to get away, but as he passed the young physician, he was grasped by the arm, while Herbert said, "have no fear, I do not come to harm you!"

At this moment, and while Foster still struggled in the arms of Herbert, Lucy, who had been alarmed by the noise, entered the room, and as her gaze fell upon her husband, she uttered a cry of recognition, and rushed towards him.

"What means this?" she asked. "Why do I find you thus?"

"Hush!" said Herbert, listening. "I was fearful some one had pursued him beside myself."

"Pursued?" asked Lucy. "Why? What has he done? Oh, Foster, speak to me, or I shall die of fear and suspense!"

"Don't speak so loud, they will hear you and take me to prison," said the wretched man in a hoarse whisper.

"To prison!" exclaimed Lucy, "for what crime?"

"I do not know," answered Foster, distractedly. "You would betray me. But no, poor woman, you look pale too. You have been suffering."

"Yes, yes; cruelly—but never mind that. We will be happy now. Happy with our child. How could you leave us so?"

"A child! have you a child?" asked Foster, with a vacant look.

"Yes, yes! our child, our little Marie!"

"He's as crazy as a hen with her head off," said Lige to Herbert. "What will the old man do when he sees him?"

"Where is he?"

"He's gone to bed."

"I will see him, and break the dreadful news to him," said Herbert.

Lucy meanwhile had led Foster to the bed, and made him sit down, taking her place by his side. He made no resistance, and seemed to be unconscious of where he was.

"Do you not remember our little child?" she asked.

"No, no; leave me! I have no child, and I am glad of it. for she would curse her father. If I had a child I would kill it. Yes, I would kill it, for it's father would be a thief, a midnight robber."

"Oh, Heavens, he is mad!" exclaimed Lucy, bursting into tears. Mad! Mad!"

"Don't cry, madam," said Foster, soothingly. Don't cry! You are good and will not denounce me. Let me stay here? You can say that I am your brother, and they will believe you."

"And is it thus, that he returns to me?" exclaimed Lucy.

"Listen!" Foster went on. "I will tell you something. I have been a very wicked man. I loved Mary Maythorne. Oh, you should have seen her! She was very beautiful, and I loved her. My love for her colored my whole life, but they separated me from her. Then I became desperate. Despair made me mad, and I became a thief!"

"Oh, Heaven! have mercy on him."

"You weep. That is kind of you. You are sorry for me. Let me see, what was I saying? Oh, yes—I remember now, there was a woman who loved me. My wife! I abandoned her, and made her wretched and unhappy."

"Yes, yes; very unhappy!" sobbed poor Lucy.

"Don't cry, it hurts me. I am sorry I abandoned her. I have repented of it from my heart. Her name was Lucy, Lucy Thornton. She loved me, and I betrayed her, and she will never pardon me the deep wrong I did her. But I love her now! I shall love her while I live."

At this moment old Hiram Dalton entered the room. He started back in amazement, at the scene before him, and then approaching the bed, he caught Foster in his arms, and exclaiming, "My son, my poor boy!" burst into tears.

"Have a care," said Creighton, drawing Hiram gently away.

"Too strong an emotion might be fatal to him."

"Look at me," said Lucy. "I am your wife! do you not remember me? I love you Foster, I pardon you."

"You will not denounce me? Swear you will not!" he exclaimed, rising, and then perceiving Herbert, he turned upon her, saying, "Ah! you have deceived me. You have betrayed me. See, you have brought him to take me to prison. It was him I robbed. Yes, yes, I remember now. It was in his house. But I did not know it. I did not know it."

"I believe you," said Herbert, "and forgive you. I must go now," he continued, addressing Foster's father, "But I will return soon. It is day-light. He is safe here, but he must be removed to the country. Perhaps the associations of home may restore his shattered mind. I have hopes of him since he has recognized me."

"Oh, Sir," exclaimed Foster. "Have pity upon me. Take me to prison, kill me if you will, but do not tell my father of my crime. He would die of shame and grief"

"Alas! he does not know me," cried Hiram. "God has indeed punished him severely."

"God has punished him, and God alone can save him," said Herbert, as he hastened away to seek the forgiveness of his wife for his fresh suspicion of her truth.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next day, punctual to his promise, Creighton Herbert visited the house where Lucy was stopping, and, by his advice, and with his assistance, Foster Dalton was taken home, accompanied by his wife and father, and Lige Bates, who was not sorry to leave the city, especially as his thoughts began to wander more and more towards Miss Nancy, who, though she had consented to become his wife on the coming Thanksgiving, he feared might change her mind, if he staid too long among the temptations of the wicked city.

Herbert gave Hiram strict instructions as to the course of treatment to be pursued towards his wretched son, and buoyed up the old man's heart, with hope, by speaking confidently of his final recovery. He also wrote letters to Parson Woodly and Doctor Parker, asking their assistance, and giving the latter such information in regard to the case as he thought necessary for his guidance, promising to visit Lenox, from time to time, and watch the indications of the mental aberration under which Foster suffered.

On their arrival at home, poor Granny Dalton, who was every day drawing nearer and more near to her grave, was overwhelmed with grief to see the sad condition of her grandson.

Weeks rolled by and still no change took place in Foster Dalton. He was mild and easily managed, and submitted to the care lavished upon him with a stolid indifference, being subject, however, to occasional outbursts of grief and passion whenever the subject of his child was mentioned. At these times none could calm or soothe him save Lige Bates, who treated him as he would a baby; and by means of his vast strength, and a sort of moral power he had by some means obtained over the mind of the patient, always succeeded in quieting him.

His mind would sometimes light up with a remembrance of the past, but he always spoke of his wife and father, as dead, and would frequently shed tears at the thought of seeing them no more. His greater grief being, that Lucy had died without forgiving him.

The case sadly puzzled poor Doctor Parker, who would have given up all hope, but for the continual assertions of Creighton Herbert, that he would eventually recover, and the favorable opinions expressed by one or two physicians of note, whom Herbert had brought from New York on the occasions of his visits.

At last Herbert came up from the city, it being midsummer, when all who can, desert the town for the country, and took up his residence at the house of his wife's father, so that not a day passed without a visit from him at the Dalton farm.

Under his continual care, a slight improvement soon began to be visible, and at last, as these signs of gradual returning mental strength began to show themselves, he formed a plan which he hoped would bring about the desired reaction at once.

Accordingly, he presented himself at the house of Hiram Dalton one morning, and taking Lucy aside, the following conversation ensued.

"You say," he commenced, as soon as they had left the house and stood in the door-yard, under the shade of the grand old elms which surrounded the place, "that since your return he has never consented to see the child?"

"Never, and whenever I have mentioned it before him, he became violent, and such an expression came over his face, that I trembled lest he should commit some fearful act."

"And you think that if you should bring her into his presence ——"

"Oh, no, no; Doctor Herbert! I would not dare. He would kill her! I have thought of sending the child away, lest by some accident he should see it, but I could not bear the thought of parting with the little one."

"I have heard him, more than once," said Herbert, "pronounce the name of Peleg Bryce."

"Yes, he attributes all his crime, all his sorrows, to him."

"Has he ever explained in what way Peleg influenced his fate?"

"Oh yes, he often speaks of it. It was this Peleg who first prompted him to leave me, and it was he who continually fanned his fatal passion for Mary, and made him jealous of you. It was through his means that he fell among the associates he did while in New York, and a man by the name of Wharton, who prompted the robbery, was set on by Peleg."

"Great Heaven!" exclaimed Herbert. This is dreadful. But listen to me and do not be frightened at what I shall say. Listen with calmness, and summon all your fortitude and faith in Heaven. There are moments when our Heavenly Father

inspires us with a thought which is made the instrument of his will, and when we have such thoughts, our hearts are full of confidence and hope. You believe in my devotion, do you not?"

"How can I doubt it?"

"I think that I can save your husband, but the means may strike you as being fearful, when the dreadful indications of his malady are taken into consideration. May I ask you to trust me?"

"I will do all you ask?"

"Then, I believe, that under the blessing of Heaven, to-day, your husband will be restored to you, that he will recover his reason, and embrace you as his wife, and take his child to his heart."

Oh, no, no. I cannot think it! His child? I cannot, I dare not trust him!"

"It must be. No harm shall happen to her."

"You make me quake with fear. But I will do as you wish."

"Bravely spoken! Put your trust in God whose humble instrument I am. But I perceive Foster coming this way, accompanied by Lige. Leave us for the present. Go, and ask Heaven to bless our efforts."

"I will, I will!" she murmured, as she hurried into the house.

Foster, accompanied by Lige, now approached with downcast step and listless slip.

As he came close to him, Herbert called him by name. He started and raised his head; then, as he recognised him, he made a step backward as if in fear. Herbert, however, spoke kindly to him again, and extending his hand, advanced towards him looking him full in the eye. The traces of fear gradually gave way in Foster's looks, and his eye brightened slightly, as he took the extended hand of Herbert's in his own.

"You know that I am your friend, do you not?" Herbert asked, at the same time making a sign for Lige to leave them alone, a hint he took by going at once.

"Yes, yes, perhaps!" he replied, looking timidly around him.

"You need not be alarmed, we are alone."

"Is there no one here to arrest me, to drag me to prison?" asked the poor maniac, with a trembling voice.

"No, no; why should any one arrest you?"

"Do you not know?"

"What do you mean?"

"Hush, speak low! The diamonds!"

"Well, what of them?"

"I stole them! Hush! Do not betray me."

"You are mistaken ; it was not you."

"Yes, yes ; it was ! "He is mad !" he said, looking at him piteously ; "mad !"

"No, no ; you were a dupe, a tool ! A miserable scoundrel - whom justice will one day overtake, took advantage of your distress, your desperation, to lead you into temptation. But you did not complete the wicked deed. Conscience stricken, you threw down your booty, and ——"

"You are wrong, I tell you. I stole the diamonds in the house of—of—I forget now, where it was, but I stole them !"

"Where are they, then ?"

"Ha, ha ! I have hid them ! Hush ! Hid them ! They were so beautiful ! I was hungry, starving ! and I became a thief, dishonored ! Thank God I have no family to share my disgrace ! The shame falls on me alone."

"You have a father, have you not ?" asked Herbert, taking his patient kindly by the hand.

"No. I have none. He died of a broken heart on my account."

"A grand-mother ? You remember your old Granny."

"Dead ! dead !"

"But your wife, who loved you so ; she still lives ?"

"I tell you no ; they are all dead. My poor Lucy ! she died without pardoning me. I have wept to think of it. I wish I had died with her, or I wish she had lived until I could have made her happy. I would have made her forget the past. But alas, she is gone forever !"

"And you have no one left in all the world ?"

"No one ; not one to love me ; not one to pity me."

"Yes, yes ; there is one. Believe me there is one !" said Herbert, impressively.

"I tell you no !"

"There is ! Marie—your child and Lucy's !"

"No. I have no child."

"You have ! I know it. I have seen her—embraced her."

"If she lives she is far from here, or if she is not, take her away."

"Why ?"

"Because I will not see her, she will know all. She would read my infamy in my looks. She would fly from me—curse me. Oh, I would rather kill her than see her blush for her father."

"Kill her ! oh, shame ! shame !"

"Yes ; I would kill her ! She shall never know her father—never see him."

"But, Foster ——"

"Say no more !" he cried, fiercely. "I will not hear you !"

"But suppose Providence should place this child near you, if your little Marie should be made an instrument for changing the whole future of your existence, and once more light up your soul with joy and happiness. If she should come to you in her loveliness and purity, and say to you, "Father I love you?"

"No, no; she cannot love me! But you deceive me, I have no child."

At a sign from Herbert, between whom and Hiram, a previous understanding had taken place, the old man advanced from the house, leading Lucy's child by the hand, followed by Lucy and poor old Granny, supported by Lige Bates and Nancy.

"See!" exclaimed Herbert, pointing to the child, "I do not deceive you, she is there!"

Every breath was hushed, and not a sound disturbed the scene, save the sweet voices of the birds flitting in the branches among the elms, as Foster looked in the direction indicated. He gazed for a moment curiously, and then turning to Herbert, while a terrible cloud overshadowed his face, he exclaimed:

"If you speak truth, take her away, quick, and hide me from her sight, or let me fly! She will read that dreadful name upon my brow! She will hear that I am —— Oh, I am going mad!"

"I speak the truth! Behold your child! Go take it in your arms!"

"No, no. Hence with it."

"Heaven smile upon me now!" Herbert prayed, mentally, as seizing the child from Herbert's arms, he took it to its father, saying, "Marie, speak to your father!"

The little thing held out its tiny hands, and in childish accents, muttered, "Poor father sick?"

"That voice!" cried Foster. "That voice! It comes upon me like a dream of the past. Yes, yes. It is my child. Then she will learn all. She will read that horrid word which burns upon my brow. No, no—rather let her die in ignorance of all."

With a bound, he leaped from Herbert's side, and rushing to the shed near by, seized an axe, and with his eyes gleaming like burning coals, he precipitated himself towards the child.

Lige Bates stood ready to seize and hold him fast, but Foster had not taken half a dozen steps before he stopped. Then he started back as if in horror, and dropped the axe upon the ground. A strange light seemed to flit across his face, and the tears streamed from his eyes.

"Pray! pray all!" Herbert said, in a low voice, as taking the child by the hand, he led her once more to her father.

"Oh, God!" shrieked Lucy. "Protect them both."

"My son! My son!" Hiram cried, going to where Foster knelt and wept.

"See," said Herbert. "See, Foster, again your child puts out her little hand to you, and asks you to embrace her."

He looked up, and a smile curled the corners of his mouth, as he gazed upon her with a fixed and earnest look. "Is it—can it be?" he said, in a low mild voice, "Is it, indeed, my child?"

"Poor father!" said the little one again, on a sign from Herbert.

"You will not fly from me? You do not curse me? No, no. You will help me. Kiss me. Will you not?"

"Yes, father, I kiss you," and the child moved towards him.

He caught her in his arms, he hugged her to his heart, he covered her with kisses—then holding her off from him, he murmured, "My daughter! Still—still a daughter! Ah, what new sensations come over me? I have never felt as I feel now. Where am I?" Then seeing Herbert, he rose, and extending his hand, exclaimed, "Mr. Herbert! Oh, God! I am very happy," and again burst into tears. "Yes," he went on, after a moment, looking Herbert in the face. "I remember—I remember!" Then hugging his child to his heart once more, he put her down, and turning, saw his father.

A blush overshadowed his face, as he removed his hat from his head, and bowed to him with reverence.

The old man could not speak at first, but seizing his hand, he shook it warmly, and said aloud, in a voice choked by emotion, "My son was lost but he is found!"

During this time Lucy stood aloof, weeping. Joy, fear, love, all filled her heart to overflowing. As Foster raised his head once more, his eye fell upon her, and he bowed himself as if in shame, then taking the little child in his arms, he said, in a low voice. "Marie, my child! ask your mother to forgive your father."

These words broke the spell, with a cry of joy, poor Lucy sprang forward, and in loving words and many sobs, forgave him all.

Poor old Granny, too, with a heart overflowing with gratitude, once more embraced her long lost favorite, as raising her trembling hands to Heaven, she murmured, "And now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!"

Lige Bates and Nancy were not forgotten, and Creighton Herbert stood with swelling heart, surveying the happy scene.

CHAPTER IX.

Nothing now remains but to bring the incidents we have related to a close.

The recovery of Foster's physical as well as mental health, was slow but certain, and in the course of a few months, the bloom once more returned to his cheeks, and the strength to his arm,

He was in all respects a changed man. He showed, by the warm affection which he evinced towards his long suffering wife and his lovely child, that his repentance was sincere, and that the resolution he had made to cause Lucy to forget the dreadful past in a happy future, should be religiously kept. He never tired of talking to her and begging her forgiveness. All the harshness of his nature seemed to have passed away, and he was in all respects a different being indeed.

For a long time he did not go abroad or mingle with the world, but at last, his delicacy in this regard wore off, and as none knew the crime of which he had been guilty, and all remarked the miraculous change for the better which had taken place in him, he gradually re-established himself in the confidence of his acquaintances, and his step once more became firm, and his eye bold, as he went about on business or on pleasure.

By the advice of Creighton Herbert, he relinquished the practice of the law, as likely to over-task his somewhat shaken faculties, and accepted a lucrative situation, which Herbert's influence procured for him, in a large manufacturing establishment, in the vicinity of Lenox, while he, his wife and child, continued to reside at the old Homestead, with his father.

Lucy too, changed. Her pale cheeks once more reflected the joy in her heart. Her eyes so long filled with tears, were lit up with animated pleasure, and her lips, so long unused to smiles, were never seen without one.

Never again has a cloud darkened the happy lot of Creighton and Mary Herbert. Confident in each other's love, and mutually regretful for the sad suspicions of the past, they live surrounded by everything which can render them happy. Beloved and honored by all who know them, and quoted as models of domestic purity and worth, they shed a ray of happiness

upon all with whom they come in contact, while their children, living in the light of their parent's example, and nurtured in all purity and truth, have proved the dearest of all the blessings which Heaven has showered upon them. Mary and Foster never meet, but Lucy is always a welcome guest of Mary's whenever she pays a visit to her father's house.

Nancy kept her word with Lige, and the next Thanksgiving eve, became his wife. They were married by good old parson Woodly, in the very room where we first met them, and a happier wedding was never seen in all New England.

Mary Herbert took care that the bride should lack no finery, and if ever there was a warm hearted, good-natured, strong-minded Yankee girl, who considered herself "scrumptious" on her wedding day, that girl was Nancy Peabody, when she stood by the side of Lige, to be converted into Mrs. Nancy Bates.

As for honest Lige, he was the envy of all the boys for miles around, and the heartiness with which he dispensed the cider, after he had been "hitched too," as he called it, and the way he laughed and joked, and kissed his blushing bride and every other girl he could lay his hands on, proved that he felt as happy as he looked.

Herbert offered to buy a farm and stock it for him, out West, if he would go and settle on it, but old Hiram would not listen to the idea, but insisted upon his staying with him, and working the old Dalton farm on shares. This suited Lige, and his wife too, better than going West, and in a snug cottage, which Hiram built for him, close by the old homestead, they live as happy as the day is long. He working the farm and she nursing the fat, chubby-faced baby, and attending to the cares of her dairy, which has the reputation of turning out the best cheese and butter, of any dairy in the county.

Poor old Granny lived about a year after the return of her grandson, and died happy in seeing him so, leaving him the bulk of her property in trust for little Marie, who was a great pet of the good old woman.

Some two years after the marriage of Lige and Nancy, Peleg Bryce returned to the neighborhood. He had come back once or twice before, but only to remain for a few days, for the purpose of disposing of his property. When he finally returned, he did so penniless, and shattered in strength and intellect by liquor. His money, which had been the only thing which had ever entitled him to consideration, being gone; dissipated, as it turned out to be afterwards, in swindling speculations practised upon him by his associates in New York, no

one cared even to recognize him, and for some months, he led a vagabond sort of a life, going from tavern to tavern, trying, by various means, to gratify his beastial appetite for liquor. At last he disappeared, and was missing for some weeks. At the end of that time, some persons, who were letting out the water from a mill-pond in the vicinity, discovered his body, embeded in the slime and filth of the pond, and half devoured by the fishes and reptiles with which the water abounded.

As no one appeared to claim the hideous mass which once was Peleg Bryce, it was buried in Potter's Field, and no stone marks the spot where it turned to earth.

Some papers, half destroyed, which were found in an old wallet, in a barn where he had been in the habit of sleeping, proved his connection with a man named Wharton, in several questionable transactions, and a news paragraph, cut from the police reports of a daily New York paper, showed that this Wharton had been sentenced to the State's Prison for life, for robbery and forgery.

Hiram Dalton is now a hale old man. The evening of his life is happy, and as each Thanksgiving day returns, he sits, the centre of a loving circle, honored and revered, and as he dandles his grand-children on his knee, he thanks Heaven for all its mercies to him, but more than all for the kind Providence which led his son back to the paths of virtue, and forgave the errors which were the bitter fruits of his "BROKEN Vow."

THE END.

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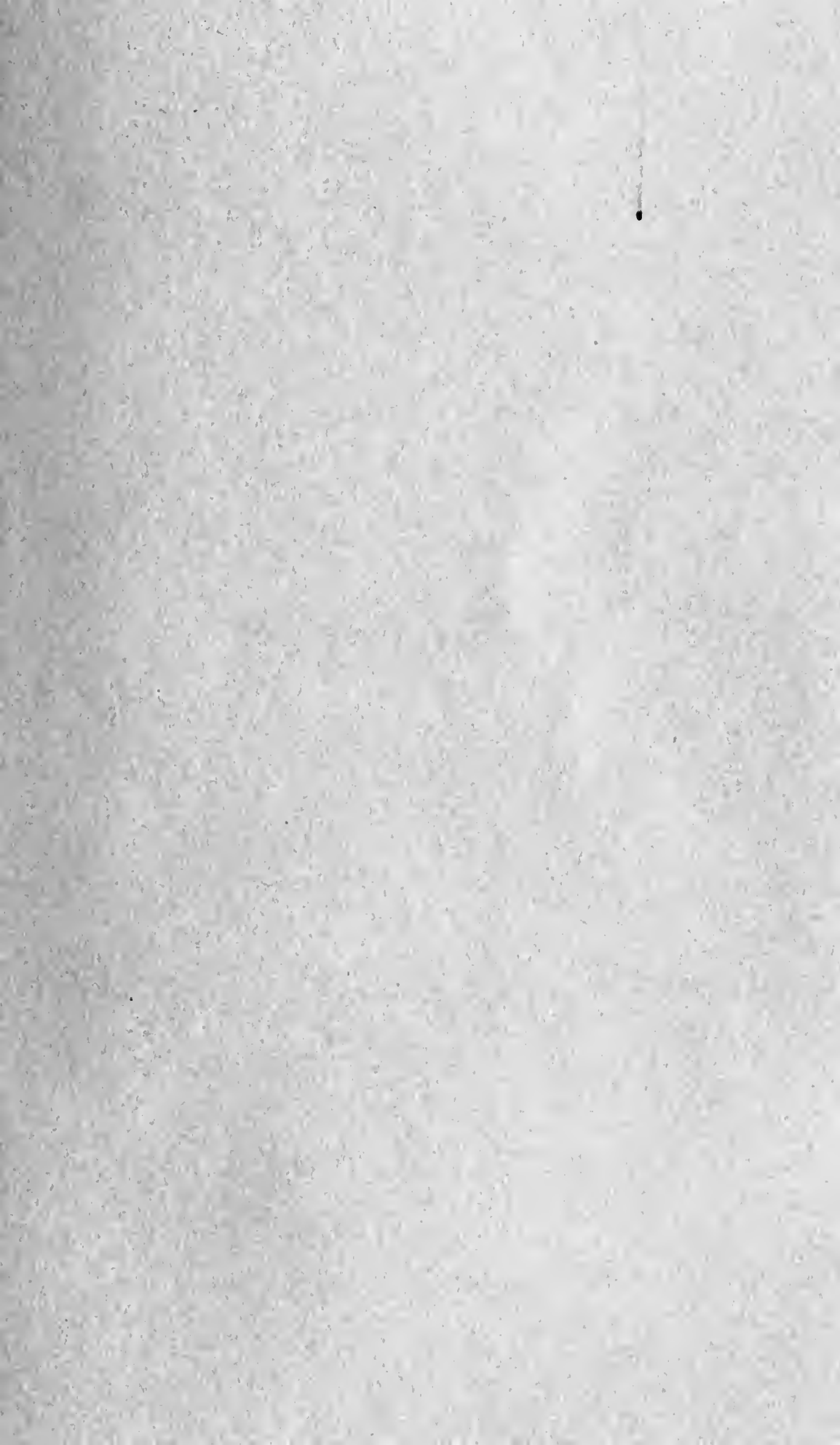
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